

Lighting Your Home

Lighting can make a big difference in the interior environment of your home. Good lighting used properly helps you to see better and perform tasks more easily. It also provides safety, security and a sense of comfort. Lighting and lighting controls also provide you with the flexibility to adjust and adapt the mood and ambiance of your home.

Lighting fixtures are ideal, and often inexpensive, accessories to supplement the interior design of your home. With an unlimited range of styles, shapes, colors and sizes, lighting fixtures can add sparkle and a final, finishing touch to your décor.

Properly used lighting should complement your lifestyle and meet your family's needs. When planning your home's lighting, keep these tips in mind:

- Identify the activities that occur in each room (reading, food preparation, hobby work, grooming, laundry, homework, etc.).
- Identify the mood or ambiance that you want to create in each space.
- Identify any decorative elements you wish to emphasize, such as artwork or wall textures.
- Identify areas with dark wall colors and finishes. These areas absorb more light than those with lighter finishes, so supplemental lighting may be required.

Living / Family Room

To meet the varied needs of a living room or family room - entertaining, watching television, reading, playing games, accenting artwork - three to four layers of lighting should be used. These might include recessed lighting around the perimeter of the room, a chandelier or central decorative fixture for general lighting, wall sconces for mood and portable lamps for reading and other tasks. Use dimmers whenever possible for maximum control of all fixtures.

Lighting Techniques for the Living/Family Room

Fireplaces made of brick or stone can be emphasized with recessed downlights installed over the mantle to create a dramatic grazing effect. Wall sconces on either side of the fireplace are another option that brings attention to the fireplace area while providing general lighting for the living room.

Reading requires task lighting that comes from behind and to the side of the reader's shoulder. This can be accomplished with a portable lamp. The bottom of the lampshade should be located at eye level to avoid glare.

Artwork can be highlighted with recessed adjustable fixtures or with low-voltage, halogen picture lights. Your local ALA showroom representative can help determine how many fixtures are needed depending on the size of the painting and the proper aiming angle.

Televisions and computer monitors require low-level ambient lighting that does not wash out the screen's image or reflect into viewers' eyes. Recessed miniature downlights or miniature track lighting can be installed in the near vicinity for task lighting. Wall sconces with an indirect lighting function, used with a dimmer, are ideal for creating a soft, non-glaring light for watching TV, or, if your television is in an armoire, consider installing undercabinet lighting to create a pleasing glow.

Game tables require bright, well-distributed overhead lighting. Shaded pendants set 36" above the table are an excellent solution, or install two recessed downlights over each half of the table.

Lighting Techniques for the Kitchen

General lighting can be achieved with either recessed lighting or a central, decorative chandelier. Recessed lighting is best placed around the perimeter of the room and approximately 30" away from the wall. Chandeliers can be used in addition to other lighting in the space. In the kitchen, it is best to use chandeliers with semi-transparent glass shades instead of fabric shades because the glass is much easier to clean.

Undercabinet lighting will quickly and easily illuminate your countertops. It is available in a variety of choices, including slim, energy-efficient fluorescents, miniature track lights and low-voltage linear systems.

Place undercabinet fixtures at the front of your cabinet – not against the wall – so the light will be distributed evenly over the area below.

Also, consider putting your undercabinet lighting on a [dimmer](#) separate from other lighting in your kitchen. The different levels of light can add depth and dramatic impact to your space, and dimming is an easy way to save energy.

Over the sink or range, recessed downlights assure even illumination. Install them to create adequate task lighting for cooking, baking and scouring pots and pans.

Today's recessed fixtures are available with a variety of trims, including metallic, so you can add a bit of flair as well as function. Plus, not all recessed fixtures are round! Square downlights have gained popularity with homeowners searching for a unique design look.

An alternative to recessed lights is a [track or rail system](#), which may be preferable if you are remodeling and do not have easy access to the space above the kitchen.

Lighting over the kitchen table is multipurpose – used for dining, homework, hobbies or family business. A decorative pendant will provide sufficient task lighting while also adding a touch of style and personality to your space. Mount pendant fixtures 30" above the table top. If your table is round, the fixture should ideally be 12" narrower than the diameter of the table. For square and rectangular tables, choose a fixture that is 12" narrower than the smallest side.

Consider installing a [dimming system](#) so you can lower the light for ambiance during dining and entertaining.

Island counters and breakfast bars demand a combination of task and general lighting. A very good solution is to add a group of miniature pendants.

Mount each pendant so that the bottom of the shade is approximately 66" above the floor so it is possible to look across the room below the pendants. If the shades are not very deep and there is seating at the kitchen island or peninsula, install the pendants a few inches lower (60" above the floor).

In general, you should install one pendant for every two feet of counter space and try to use an odd number of pendants to create better balance. Thin, narrow pendants, however, might look more pleasing with the

addition of one or two extra fixtures.

Cabinets provide excellent opportunities for a layer of accent lighting in the kitchen.

If your cabinets have glass fronts, consider installing a low-voltage linear system or LED downlights or strips inside to highlight your china or collectibles.

Add lighting to the spaces above and below your cabinets to give a more upscale look and create the illusion of more space. A variety of light sources can be used to illuminate these cove and toe-kick spaces, including LED strips.

Be sure to place the light source as far away from the wall as possible to provide the most even illumination.

Dining Room

Dining room lighting should be both beautiful and functional. This can be accomplished using a mix of ambient, task and accent lighting. These various layers of light establish the mood for a variety of functions, including dining, homework or family bookkeeping. Dimming controls will enable you to vary the light for each function.

Lighting Techniques for the Dining Room

A chandelier is often the focal point of a dining room. Suspended over the dining table, it serves as a decorative element that enhances the beauty of your fine furnishings. When the light is dimmed, a soft, glowing atmosphere similar to candlelight is created. If equipped with a downlight, the chandelier provides task lighting for the table and accent lighting for a centerpiece.

Choose a chandelier that is 6" narrower than the smallest width of the dining table. If your table is 48" x 72", then the recommended width of the fixture is approximately 36". The chandelier should hang approximately 30" above the tabletop in an 8' ceiling. For each additional foot of ceiling height, add one inch. In a 10' ceiling, the chandelier should hang approximately 32" above the table.

Recessed or track lighting provides ambient lighting, while enabling you to highlight prized possessions throughout the room. A ring of four recessed downlights around the dining table supplements the light from the chandelier, while providing accent lighting for your tableware.

A buffet or sideboard can be flanked with wall sconces on either side. Choose fixtures that complement the style of your chandelier. Displayed objects can be accented with recessed downlights in the ceiling above installed 24" to 36" apart and 9" to 12" inches from the wall.

Artwork can be dramatically lighted with recessed adjustable accent fixtures or with picture lights. Ask your [local ALA showroom](#) representatives to help you choose fixtures that are best suited for this purpose.

Cabinets can become showplaces for your prized collectibles when you install low-voltage linear systems or small puck lights with miniature incandescent bulbs or LEDs.

Bathroom

More spacious and multifunctional than ever before, the once-utilitarian bathroom has evolved into a private retreat for relaxation, escape and self-indulgence. The right lighting can make a bathroom even more gracious.

Whether built new or recently remodeled, bathrooms today demand intricate lighting solutions. Task lighting must be bright enough to do its job, but also work well with indirect accent lighting to soften the room's ambiance and provide a warm glow. Decorative and ornate light fixtures and lamps provide elegance and sophistication. Shower light brighten up enclosed stalls. Reading lamps by the toilet provide more focused light.

Lighting Techniques for the Bathroom

For small mirrors, decorative wall fixtures placed on each side of the mirror will provide the even, shadow-free facial illumination necessary for daily grooming tasks. For best results, mount fixtures at least 28" apart and 60" off the floor.

Newer techniques of bathroom lighting even include using small pendants on either side of the mirror.

For large mirrors, a strip of horizontal vanity lights will ensure that each person has sufficient light. Mount the strip 78" off the floor. The best lighting solution is achieved with fixtures that include a shade for each bulb.

Also add a dimmer to your vanity light. You will be amazed at how often you will use it and how much comfort it adds to the use of your bathroom.

Shower and tub lighting should be bright enough for cleaning, shaving and reading shampoo labels. Choose recessed downlights designed for use in wet areas. Shielded fixtures will protect reclining bathers' eyes from glare.

An adjustable accent light aiming from outside the tub is dramatic, glare-free and great for those who bring books to the bath.

Undercabinet lighting can make middle-of-the-night trips to the bathroom safer and easier. Install a low-voltage linear lighting or LED system in the toe spaces beneath the vanities and cabinets.

Consider installing an occupancy sensor wall switch so the lights come on when you need them and switch off when not in use to save energy.

In the center of the ceiling, a decorative light fixture that blends with the rest of your decor provides an elegant touch while providing adequate light for safety, cleaning and moving about. It also balances the brightness of other bathroom lights.

Ceiling mount fixtures, small chandeliers and decorative vent fans with integrated lighting are a few of the options for modern bathrooms.

Separate toilet compartments require local lighting. A single recessed downlight or surface fixture installed over the commode provides good light for water closet reading. The surface fixture will provide a general quality of light, while the recessed downlight will provide a concentrated light.

Bedroom

When lighting a bedroom, you will want to create an overall atmosphere of quiet relaxation, while providing some bright spots for reading and other activities. A combination of general and task lighting that takes into account the age and lifestyle of the occupant(s) is needed. Remember, dimming controls give you the flexibility to vary the light to suit different moods and activities.

Lighting Techniques for the Bedroom

General, ambient lighting can be provided by ceiling fixtures, chandeliers, fan lights, recessed downlights or wall sconces, giving you the illumination you need to dress and see into drawers and closets.

For closets, recessed or close-to-the-ceiling fixtures give you good general lighting without taking up much space. Closets are a good place to save energy by using compact fluorescent bulbs.

Next to the bed, portable lamps provide plenty of light for reading, or you can install swing-arm wall lamps to free up the space on your end tables. Another idea is to hang pendants next to the bed or install recessed downlights in the ceiling over the bed.

Children's fixtures can add whimsy and style to your child's room. For a practical solution, consider track lights, which can be swiveled, rotated and aimed in any direction to shed light on play areas, desks or artwork.

Home Theater

Proper lighting in a home theater room requires a mix of ambient and accent lighting to enhance your viewing, help prevent eyestrain and make the room practical to move around in after the movie.

Lighting Techniques for Home Theater

For general lighting, recessed fixtures on a dimmer provide soft ambient light that will let you see your popcorn without distracting from the movie. Another option is to install wall sconces or set track lighting to provide a glow along the room's walls.

Cabinets and shelving can be fitted with undercabinet or puck lights to illuminate electronics or

collectibles.

Cove lighting in tray ceilings can provide an element of drama. Use a dimming system to control the mood of the lighting.

Ceiling Fans

Energy conservation and rising fuel costs make ceiling fans a natural choice when it comes to conserving our natural resources. Ceiling fans not only circulate cool air in the summer, they also help with the movement of warm air in the winter.

During the summer months, a fan operating in the normal mode can reduce how cool you feel in a room by as much as eight degrees, allowing you to raise the air conditioner's thermostat and reduce energy costs.

In the winter, fans should be operated in reverse mode to recirculate the warm air trapped at the ceiling. For maximum energy savings, turn your fans off when you leave a room.

More than just functional appliances, today's fans have become an important design element in homes and are available in a wide array of sizes and styles.

Techniques for Selecting a Ceiling Fan

Fan Size: Bigger rooms need bigger fans. For maximum efficiency, choose a fan to fit your room size. Rooms up to 75 square feet, like a bathroom, do best with a fan 36" or smaller. Medium sized rooms up to 144 square feet can fit ceiling fans from 36" - 42". The larger bedrooms and family rooms around 225 square feet are most efficient with fans that are 50" - 54".

Ceiling Height: Place the fan higher than 7 feet above the floor in the middle of the room for maximum comfort, circulation, safety and aesthetics. Optimal placement would be either 8 or 9 feet from the floor.

Blades: Fan blades determine the amount of air being circulated throughout the room. The fan blade brackets should be positioned to hold the blade at a 12-15 degree angle for optimal circulation and be weighed and matched as a balanced set to avoid having your fan wobble. The greater the angle of the blade the more air circulation you will have in your room. Ask [your ALA showroom](#) representative for any additional questions on fan blades or angles.

Motor: The heart of every ceiling fan is the motor. The motor is responsible for producing quiet operation while driving the blades for air movement. Look for high-quality motors with heavy-duty windings and sealed bearings that are permanently lubricated.

Lights: Lights can enhance your fan's design, with shades available in a variety of materials from stone to crystal and hand blown glass. For a more relaxed environment, consider uplighting, where light bounces off the ceiling to create more of a mood effect than the traditional downlighting.

Damp Locations: Fans to be used outdoors or in bathrooms should be specifically designed and approved for damp locations.

Style: Ceiling fans are available in a wide selection of styles and finishes to complement your decor. Look for a high quality finish to resist against blistering, tarnishing, fading and corrosion.

Warranty: When you choose to purchase look for a good warranty for the life of your fan. Some fan manufacturers offer a lifetime warranty and in-home service\

Installation: Installation can be so easy that with a few basic skills one person can install the product themselves. With step by step instructions your new fan can be up and working efficiently. Some fans come with a support system to assist you by freeing your hands to make wiring connections. For extra help ask [your ALA showroom](#) representative how to get assistance with hanging your new fan in your home.

Outdoor Lighting

Outdoor lighting enhances the beauty of your property while providing safety and security. Outdoor lighting also allows you to take advantage of your outdoor spaces after dark and adds value to your home.

It is important to note that many cities have implemented special building codes related to the type of lighting you are allowed to use outdoors. Check with your local building inspection office regarding this issue before installing outdoor lighting.

A well-lighted front entrance enables you to greet guests and identify visitors. Wall lanterns on each side of the door will give your home a warm, welcoming look, while assuring the safety of those who enter. Under a porch or other overhang, you can use recessed, chain-hung or close-to-ceiling fixtures. A separate rear or side entrance can be lighted with a single wall lantern installed on the keyhole side of the door.

Outside the garage, mount a lantern on each side or install a single fixture above to provide lighting for safety and security. Consider installing a motion sensor on these fixtures or a photocell that turns the lights on at dusk and off at dawn to save energy.

For added security, illuminate any side of the house that would otherwise be in shadow. Spotlights installed on your eaves will accomplish this, or, for a more dramatic look, consider ground lights pointed up to graze your walls. To conserve energy, install a sensor that will switch on the light only at night or upon motion. If using uplighting, aim the fixtures so that the light is captured by your eaves to lessen light pollution.

Steps, paths, and driveways should be illuminated to make sure family members and guests are able to move about easily and safely after dark. You can install path lights or post lanterns or attach lights to the side of the house. Low-level path lights, which spread circular patterns of light, will brighten your walkway while highlighting nearby flower beds, shrubs and ground cover. Low-level path lights can also be used to define the boundaries of long driveways. Bollards, which stand 30 to 36 inches off the ground, also work well. Use shielded fixtures to avoid glare.

Decks, porches, and patios can be converted into romantic evening retreats by concealing low-voltage mini-lights under steps, railing or benches. Another idea is to install a spotlight in the branches of a nearby tree.

Pools and fountains illuminated with underwater lighting provide beauty and safety for evening entertaining or swimming. Low-voltage and LED lighting are popular sources for ambient pool lighting, or install fiber-optic lighting to create a starry background in your pool's floor and around its edges. Floating and solar-powered lights are also available. Be sure to check with your local building authorities for safety regulations before installing new lighting systems in existing pools.

Grills and serving areas benefit from bright task lighting. To accomplish this, install a recessed spot-light on an adjacent roof overhang, mount lights on a railing behind the grill or use a portable fixture approved for outdoor environments.

Other Home Areas

In the entrance foyer, general lighting is needed to welcome guests and assure safe passage. This can be furnished by a decorative ceiling fixture that emits a generous spread of light. If more light is needed, consider placing matching wall sconces on either side of a foyer mirror.

Hallways should be illuminated every 8 to 10 feet for safety. You can accomplish this with ceiling fixtures, wall sconces, recessed fixtures or track lighting. Movable track fixtures will give you the general lighting you need for safety, while allowing you to accent any artwork or family photos.

Stairs should be lighted from top to bottom to prevent accidents, with switches at both ends for convenience. If hall and foyer fixtures do not illuminate the entire stairway, you can install a chain-hung or close-to-ceiling fixture above the top step.

Utility/laundry areas need plenty lighting for sorting and spotting laundry, measuring detergent and setting dials. Consider a large ceiling fixture with energy-efficient fluorescent tubes or recessed fixtures spaced evenly around the room for general lighting. Adjustable track lighting and undercabinet lighting can also be good options for task lighting.