

Universal Lighting Services - Home Lighting Design Guide

This article is not the definitive guide on how to select the perfect light fittings for your home, but sets out considerations and gives you tips on what to look for and the benefits of different lighting types. It is impossible for me to give specific advice without visiting the room or home in question.

This is a lengthy article that you may wish to bookmark in your browser to revisit, [or click this link to download in pdf format to read at your leisure](#) (opens in new window).

Introduction

Home lighting is the most important key feature that will dramatically change the appearance and atmosphere of your home. Clever planning will add value and style to your home. This section of our website will help you choose and consider the importance when choosing lights for each individual room.

Choosing the correct type of lighting and lamp bulbs for your home is an important aspect in creating a practical yet comfortable feature in all rooms of the house. Each room has to be looked at from a different viewpoint and includes the style of light you will choose to the effect of light the fitting will create.

Lighting is often overlooked when people look at interior design, but when considered carefully it can add tremendous impact to the home environment. It will enhance the colour of your décor, provide warmth and atmosphere and can be used to separate and easily identify different zones within your home. There are essentially three types of lighting which, when combined correctly, will create your optimum lighting solution. These are general lighting, task lighting, and accent lighting.

General Lighting

General lighting is the most well-known and widely used type of lighting you have in your room. It will either be the centre light fitting, suspended from your ceiling or your main source of light maybe from wall lights if there is no centre fixture. General lighting in the room is considered to be the most important of all the lighting categories. It has to be functional to light a room for a sufficient light that will ensure people are able to see properly from a safety point of view.

Task Lighting

Task lighting is used to illuminate specific targets of the home where light is needed in addition or on its own to assist where the general lighting is not able to reach. For example, a desk used for reading may need an extra reading lamp or desk lamp to give light aimed at a certain place to enable the reader to view paper work clearly without impeding the eyesight. Another important area of task lighting very often overlooked is under cabinet lighting

in kitchens where the general light is often blocked by a person preparing food on a work surface. The use of under cabinet lights will generate the perfect illumination for task lighting in a kitchen.

Bathroom lighting is very often overlooked for task lights. The same situation occurs when a bathroom mirror is used and a person's body will block out the general light impeding the view. This is remedied with the use of either wall lights or mirror lights. A few important aspects should be considered when choosing a task light for bathroom use, one is to only use a light suitable intended for that particular bathroom zone, and the other is to consider the illumination glare from the chosen light.

Depending on the wattage used, type of lamp bulb and positioning of the light, thought must be given to stop the glare from a light actually impeding vision rather than assisting it. Task lighting in a sitting room can be in the use of a floor standard lamp positioned behind a chair or settee to light up a specific area for reading. Bedroom task lights would be in the similar theme either table lamps or wall lights again for lighting targeted areas.

Accent Lighting

Accent lighting is by far the most creative and interesting of all three categories. Accent lighting is not used at all for practical use; instead it is used to create moods, to highlight certain features in a home for instance an alcove or fireplace, or a feature plant or ornament.

Accent Lighting has become more and more creative over the past few years and with new products becoming available it is the most imaginative type of lighting that can be used to create many wonderful features around any home, which can make dramatic statements to any home or subtle effects, which can be striking.

One aspect to be considered when choosing accent lighting is to consider the energy consumption of the fitting you choose to create this ambient type of lighting. With the cost of energy bills and the awareness we all have regarding our carbon footprint the way we choose accent lighting should be towards looking at low energy products which will create effective features without damaging our wallets as well as the planet. Lighting the house is a very important aspect regarding style and light output the fittings we choose will give us, however another very important issue is the concern of energy cost and emissions from incandescent lamp bulbs.

In the UK alone it has been estimated that using energy saving lamps will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by 2.3 million tonnes a year. Please see our special information pages regarding low energy and energy saving tips and advice.

Accent lighting will give your home an individual and unique personal touch from the use of LED's that are very low wattage and can highlight any feature in your home such as curtain pelmets. A dark gloomy corner of any room can be transformed into an array of different colours. The only thing that can hold you back on accent lighting is your own imagination.

For garden lighting design, please see our [garden lighting ideas](#) at the foot of the garden lights section.

Entrance Hallways and Vestibule Lighting

These areas are often the first place that visitors will enter when visiting. They need to be warm and inviting, yet provide sufficient light for everyday living such as moving from one room to another. Fortunately, these areas are particularly well suited to making a statement.

If you have the ceiling height a pendant or chandelier will create the wow factor. [A traditional hanging lantern](#), a fabulous crystal ceiling light or silk fabric pendant will create a look of opulence.

If you have a lower ceiling, then the same will apply but you will be looking for a flush or semi-flush ceiling light of a similar design that will fit closer to the ceiling.

If you have a telephone or console table in your hallway, then a table lamp is a good way of adding another lighting layer. This can be left on or switched on when visitors call and will provide a pleasing pool of light that can draw the eye into your home.

A carefully placed mirror behind a table lamp, at the end of the hallway or positioned to reflect the light from a pendant or chandelier can work wonders. It can make your hallway appear much larger than it is and reflect light into otherwise inaccessible corners, making the space seem brighter, lighter and more inviting.

If you have a small hallway or space is limited you can create pools of light by using down lights and wall lights to create a welcoming effect. Mirrors can be placed above the wall lights to create an illusion of space and reflect the light back into the space.

Staircase Lighting

This is the one area in almost any home where there is an opportunity to create a dramatic statement. Most staircases have a double ceiling height that gives you the chance to choose something larger with a longer drop such as a spiral stairwell pendant. These tend to be multi-level pendants, often decorated with crystal shades that will provide a focal point to your hall and landing.

A bright ceiling light positioned over the stairs adds safety by defining the stair risers making them easier to see.

Tip: It is important to consider how a staircase light fitting will look from all angles. Most ceiling lights are designed to be viewed from below, but in this case it is likely that it can also be viewed from above, so check that you are happy with your choice from all angles before committing to buy.

Landings

Most landings are smaller than the hallway and in reality they act as a corridor from one area to another such as bedrooms to bathrooms. From a safety point of view it is important that these areas remain reasonably clear from clutter to allow smooth movement through the space. This is particularly important if you have young people or the elderly using it at night to go to the bathroom for example.

Flush or [semi-flush ceiling lights](#) or wall washers are perfect for landings as they are unobtrusive and efficient. It is a good idea to choose dimmable lights for landings as they can be left on a low level throughout the night to aid safe passage for children, the elderly or anyone half awake.

Lounges & Living Room Lighting

This area is the most difficult to advise on as everyone has different tastes and every room is unique in some way. The living room or kitchen is the main living area in most homes and where we spend the most time, so requires special consideration. The living room requires a subtle blend of the three key lighting elements to be comfortable and relaxing, yet bright enough to perform tasks or for reading.

We need to consider the physical aspects of the room. If a room is north facing then it will appear quite dark, particularly in the winter months. If it faces south then the opposite is true and is likely to remain brighter for longer even in the winter. If it faces east then it will get the morning sun and if it faces west it will capture the setting sun making it very sensual in the late evening.

Whatever the aspect of your living room, lighting levels should be easy to control and capable of producing a warm cosy atmosphere with additional lighting available when required. This can best be achieved through a combination of ceiling and wall lighting and a balanced mix of table, floor or task lamps depending on the size and layout of your room.

As a general guide, a room of up-to 5m x 4m (16ft x 12ft 6") will require a three-light ceiling fitting for sufficient overhead illumination. If you require more light as your room may face north or there are elderly people regularly using the room, then a five-light fitting may be more desirable. If your ceiling height allows then a pendant or chandelier would be a good choice. For rooms with limited ceiling height then a semi-flush or [flush ceiling light](#) is the way to go. For larger rooms, a larger scale light fitting is almost a must. Not only will it provide sufficient light to illuminate a large space but it will add drama and impact. Whatever the size of your room dimmable light fittings are a good idea as they can be set to give the required lighting levels to suit your mood at the time.

Dimmable floor uplighter lamps or mother and child floor lamps are a great idea in most living rooms. They can be placed in the corner of any room using mainly unused floor space and bounce light off the ceiling back into the room for a softer diffused light. In many cases, people choose to use a floor standing uplighter as the main source of light in the late evening. The mother and child floor lamp has the added benefit of a directional task or reading lamp that can be used without disturbing others in the room.

Table lamps play an important role in the overall living room scheme. They are a truly flexible way of adding an extra lighting layer and can be placed almost anywhere there is a flat stable surface. Further information on selecting your table lamp can be found by following [this link to our table lamp section](#).

Lights In The Dining Room

Our dining room is not just used for the family to eat breakfast or the evening meal; it is also used for entertaining. The ever increasing cost of dining out has made it more and more popular for us to entertain and be entertained in our or our friends' homes. The dining room needs to perform a number of functions and a good deal of thought should be given to how it will be lit. The dining room ceiling light should be chosen with extra care. It should be mounted as centrally as possible in the room or centrally over the dining table. It should be large and bright enough to illuminate the whole table. This will avoid anyone sitting in a shadow or feel as if they are sitting in a spotlight due to over illumination of one area.

The height at which a ceiling light hangs over a table is also important to avoid people getting glare from the lamps. We would always recommend a minimum height of 750mm (2ft 6") above the dining table surface to avoid glare. A dimmable ceiling light is always a good idea as it allows maximum flexibility.

Tip: Choose a ceiling light fitting that mirrors the shape of your dining table. If you have a large rectangular table, then a linear shaped pendant is a good modern choice. If you have a circular dining table, than a circular chandelier or fabric pendant of a suitable size is ideal.

Once the meal has finished and your guests' attention turns to after dinner drinks and conversation, [wall washers](#), table and floor lamps are an ideal choice. These can be used instead of the main ceiling light to create an intimate relaxed and cosy atmosphere to while away an hour or so of conversation.

Bedroom Lights

Before you embark on a lighting scheme you need to carefully consider what you use it for. Do you read or watch television in bed? Is it a young child's bedroom or are you elderly or suffer from poor sight? In all cases there should be mix of lighting to provide flexibility and ambiance.

Soft pools of light are the key to good bedroom lighting. There should be no harsh light anywhere to be found in a space that should promote relaxation and calm. That said, there still needs to be a brighter central light source for when you are getting dressed for example.

The ceiling light should be of sufficient size and be in proportion to the size of the room and the style should be in keeping with the rest of the décor. Use fabric shades to create a softer light or a dazzling [crystal chandelier](#) for a more opulent look.

Wall lights and [bedside table lamps](#) are a great choice as their softer lighting effect can enhance relaxation. If you read or watch the television in bed then a [touch dimming table lamp](#) is an excellent choice as they can be turned on, dimmed and turned off simply by touching the lamp body.

[Swing arm wall lights](#) were made for people who like to read in bed. One positioned above and either side of the bed gives you the ability to be able to switch them on separately and swing the arm out overhead. This will create a lovely pool of light for you to read by. Some even have a main shaded light and separate directional LED reading light for the ultimate in convenience and flexibility.

For the designer look consider fewer larger statement pieces such as a larger crystal chandelier and a single matching table lamp.

For children's bedrooms consideration should be given to the age and gender of the child. Younger children will benefit from a bright colourful ceiling light that can be dimmed to a lower level and left on during the night. As they get older, they may require a space to do their homework and a [desk lamp](#) may be required. In any event, the original colourful light will probably have to go and be replaced with some colour change remote control thing-amy as your darling child becomes a teenager.

Safety is paramount when choosing a young child's lighting scheme. Always ensure that the light fitting cannot be touched and that in particular light bulbs are out of reach. Light bulbs can get very hot in use and can cause severe burns if touched. If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of a light fitting for your child's room, please contact us.

Kitchen Lighting

I cannot emphasise enough that getting your kitchen lighting right is the key to making the kitchen a great place to be. It does not matter if you use your kitchen just for cooking or it is the main family room at the heart of everything you do.

It is a multi-functional space that requires great care and consideration at the planning stage as it is much more difficult to change once the kitchen is installed and tiled.

For further information about kitchen lighting, please follow [this link to our kitchen lighting design guide](#) for detailed kitchen lighting information.

Bathroom Lighting

Information about how to select your bathroom lights can be found by following [this link to our bathroom lighting section](#).

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