



Bloomington Quarterly

Tips for Choosing Lighting

Most of us take lighting for granted. When we need some light, we flip a switch, and we don't give it much thought beyond that. But lighting can dramatically change the feeling in a room, making it seem inviting or stark, stimulating or intimate. And compared to other remodeling options, it's relatively inexpensive to change.

There are three basic types of lighting: general, task and accent. General lighting provides an area with overall illumination and is accomplished with chandeliers, ceiling- or wall-mounted fixtures, and recessed or track lights. Task lighting helps people perform specific jobs such as reading, sewing, cooking and playing games and is generally created with recessed, track or pendant lights or portable lamps. Task lighting should be free of glare and shadows and bright enough to prevent eyestrain. Accent lighting creates visual interest by spotlighting prized possessions or highlighting the texture of a wall, for example. This is usually done using track, recessed, wall-mounted or under shelf fixtures.

Here are some special considerations as you plan the lighting for your home:

- Size a chandelier in proportion to the room, not the table. (The table might change, but the room won't.) To select the right size chandelier, measure the width and length of the room in feet and add them together. The sum is the size (in inches) of the diameter for your chandelier. The chandelier should hang no lower than five feet above the floor or 30 inches above the tabletop.
- Accent lighting should be positioned at a 30 degree angle from the object being spotlighted.
- To wash an entire wall in light, mount fixtures 2-3 feet from the wall if the ceiling is 9 feet high and 3-4 feet from the wall if the ceiling is 9-11 feet high. Space fixtures the same distance from each other as they are from the wall.
- In the kitchen, fluorescent lights in the ceiling provide plenty of general lighting, but they would create a shadow when you stand at the sink, making it difficult to clean pots and pans well. A single recessed light placed over the sink and range will provide necessary task lighting for these work areas. Dinettes and island counters can be lighted with pendants. Illuminate countertops with under-cabinet fluorescent lights. Mount these as close to the front of the cabinet as possible, and make sure they cover at least two-thirds the length of the counter.



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