



Bring Definition to Your Home with Interior Lighting

BY KURT KRUEGER | PHOTOS BY UNLIMITED STYLE PHOTOGRAPHY AND SHAWN BISHOP PHOTOGRAPHY

For most homes, lighting is additive to the room, not usually the ‘star.’ But, since beautiful lighting can accentuate the mood of each room, it’s worth thinking about the overall space and the atmosphere you are seeking to create, rather than assuming the standard ‘six lights per room.’

How do you want to feel? Artificial lighting decisions should be based on needs and use. For example, in the living room, the theme may be relaxation and study. You may be an avid reader and want only the soft glow of a reading lamp. In a large, two-story great room used for entertaining or display of treasured art pieces, a combination of bright natural daylight with accent and feature lighting may be just right.

Kitchens are a special case. They need a lot of task lighting and usually require the most extensive light planning. Within the overall layout of the kitchen, an effective lighting strategy is needed to illuminate the areas that will be most used for prep, washing/cleaning, and serving. Each area benefits from having its own plan. The secret is not just putting lights everywhere. No one wants their ceiling to look like a spaceship.

You may recall in the '70s and '80s, whole ceiling overhead lighting was the fad. Why didn't this work? The problem was that it

didn't provide lighting at the right spots. One's own body would often cast shadows right down on the chopping and prep area. Food would appear dull looking because of the fluorescents. Today, a combination of under-cabinet task lighting coupled with overhead lights can offer a great balance.

Coloration matters. The color of light exists on a scale from warm to cool. There are so many choices in lighting today from LED to Halogen, to Incandescent, to hybrids. Each has a use. Although subtle, lighting can often be the difference between a space feeling warm and inviting, or stark and cold. Light creates an atmosphere that can move us emotionally. If a room already has a lot of wood tones, browns, and yellows, brighten it up by using the cool side of the light spectrum with a little more white. For a period lighting solution, an incandescent like a reproduction Edison Bulb provides a warmer, more yellow light.

New Home Construction and the Use of Natural Light

When starting the design for a new construction home, you have the added benefit of creating the lighting scheme from scratch. To start, take a birds-eye, top-down view and consider the orientation of the house to the sun. In addition, consider how the house and

grounds will be used at various times of the day. There may be existing trees or walls casting shadows — this detail must be factored in during the design process. After careful thought about each one of these elements, determine the optimum orientation of the building on the site. Plan ahead and include all possible architectural features, including, for example, trellises and overhangs that provide shade under the harsh sun of the California summers, while allowing direct sunlight in the winter.

Natural light is a major component of any lighting plan. Many of us love a breakfast area on the eastern side of the home because nothing is more pleasing than the morning sun to start the day. The dining room might best be oriented for the enjoyment of the setting sun. By studying how the sun and the property interact, locations, orientations and features will become clear.

You don't have to settle for the standard lighting approach in either your custom new home or renovation project. Lighting brings personality to the space and it is important in a custom home to orient these choices specifically to you.

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