



LIGHTING GALLERY



PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

ON THE COVER and ON THESE PAGES: The Lighting Gallery in Huntington Station designed the lights in this Babylon home.

BY DONNA ROGERS
Special to Newsday

In an overall renovation project, lighting is often an afterthought, ignored until the last coat of paint is dry on the wall. Lighting designers say this is a blunder that can leave beautiful imported tile, gleaming woodwork or custom upholstery in the shadows.

Lighting is not only about ambient or task lighting, but the overall look of a space, they say. It can accent that special wood-carving, natural stone or piece of art. By varying its intensity, you also can create an illusion or mood with lighting, whether that's entertaining with sparkle or spending an evening home alone.

Gone are the days when a single fixture lit an entire room. Today, lighting is done in layers, and these layers can be controlled separately to contribute to a home that is adaptable and energy-efficient.

But waiting until the project is nearly complete can result in disappointment. It may lead

get that special glow

Today's styles call for 'layered' lighting that is flexible and energy-efficient

to cramped spaces for fixtures, lack of wiring for electrical hookups or no budget for lights that complement your style, says Michael Lichtenstein, president of the Lighting Gallery in Huntington Station.

But how do you navigate this mystifying world of illumina-

tion? An amazing array of styles, dimensions and bulb types are available. From track to recessed, portable to pendant, cabinet to cove, light emitting diodes to compact fluorescent lamps, how does one know how to choose the proper scale, intensity, height and placement?

Lighting designers discuss how to light a room — from choosing the right style and dimension of fixtures to the height they should be hung:

1 PLAN AHEAD

Make lighting part of the overall design, says Lichtenstein. Common failures are low ceilings and cramped spaces inadequate for a fixture, fixtures sized too small or — a worst-case scenario — adding high hats after ceiling construction is complete. And if you plan to float furniture in the center of the room, you may want to wire an outlet that fits flush with the floor at the outset.

2 LAYER YOUR LIGHTING

The stark, contrasty lighting resulting from using only high hats can make a room "look like Swiss cheese," says Natalie Weinstein of Natalie Weinstein Design Associates in St. James. To give an interior even lighting and visual interest, a room ideally should at least have three lighting layers, says Joe Rey-Barreau, consulting director of education at the Texas-

Lighting designers recommend having several kinds of lights: On the ceiling, the monorail, left, and chandelier, right, provide task lighting for work zones. Cabinet lights provide accents, and recessed lights help fill dark areas — plus, they add task lighting by the stove.

based American Lighting Association.

Layering gives a room vibrancy, explains Marilyn Schulman, owner and president, Bay Shore Lighting and Home. "It's not that bland, gray, overcast day," she says. "It's a sunny day that sparkles." In a kitchen, this might mean incorporating the following three layers: overall lighting such as recessed can lights, under-cabinet lighting and pendants over an island. A fourth layer could be a decorative light, such as a chandelier or ceiling fan with a light kit, says Rey-Barreau. By placing lights on separate switches, it allows you to localize the lighting, using only what you need at a given time, he adds.

3 PICK A STYLE

There's been an "exponential growth of styles — from traditional to ultramodern," says Rey-Barreau. But so many options mean that showrooms can't put everything up, so you may need to search out that special style. Try websites like the American Lighting Association's to find showrooms that are members or have Certified Lighting Consultants (a designation that requires educational courses and passing an exam). Also check manufacturers' catalogs in the stores.

Manufacturers are now offering a range of lights in one style, points out Rey-Barreau. For instance, wall scones, chandeliers and exterior lighting in the same general design can help tie together separate spaces.

Once a light was offered in one or two sizes, but today a similar light may come in a wide variety of sizes, Rey-Barreau says. For example, several years ago, a chandelier may have come in a standard 30 inches. Now it is offered in 48 inches wide for a three-story foyer, as well as a mini chandelier (known as chandelette) in 20 inches and even 14 inches. The latter are popular for powder rooms or even to create a classy look in a walk-in closet.

Recessed lights provide the main lighting for the table as well as accent lighting for the artwork. The decorative chandelier adds ambience to the space as well as "fill" lighting.

ON TASK

To begin your lighting plan, recommends Rey-Barreau, the four or five places you need great light. They may include kitchen countertops, areas for reading bedroom and a family desks, game tables, room vanities and the study room.

Sometimes overhead lighting is confused with task lighting, say others. But popular styles such as high and monorail lighting can be used as general lighting, says J.R. Rotell, design consultant with Ethan in Huntington Station. More intense, directed lighting such as table and floor lamps for tasks like reading hobbies. Overhead lighting turned off, dimmed watching TV or used for security, she adds.



5 SCALE IT RIGHT What's the proper dimension and height to hang a chandelier? Table dimension is key, light-

ing experts say. Size a chandelier at least 12 inches less than the width of your table, Lichtenstein recommends. That way people won't bump their heads. Using that guide with a

standard table width of 48 inches, choose a traditional round chandelier no more than 36 inches wide.

As for height, hang it 30 to 36 inches above the table, says Rotell. If you have a tall ceiling of 9 or 10 feet or more, hang it on the higher end of the range, and you may want to try a chandelier with two levels of lights set vertically.

As for table lamps, which stand anywhere from 24 to 32 inches high, how do you choose the proper height? What you select should depend upon your furniture height — the bottom of the shade should be just above eye level when you're sitting, Rotell notes. "You don't want to see up into its guts when you are sitting," adds Lichtenstein.

6 USE ACCENT LIGHTING

People think lighting design has to be expensive, says Lichtenstein. It doesn't have to be. It's easy to backlight a tree in a corner with a simple spotlight or extend lights up and over a hutch or bookcase to shine down on books.

Add warmth with well lights in the floor to graze a stacked stone fireplace, he says, or add a subtle glow around the room's perimeter and ceiling with cove lighting (try LED

rope lights, which come in lengths up to 250 feet). Cast an overall glow with wall washers, or add a delicate scalloping effect on the wall. Sconces also can enhance a romantic mood.

Create ambience by placing two small recessed lights in the ceiling to illuminate a centerpiece, says Weinstein. Or, to really make your crystal chandelier pop and sparkle, place two small ceiling-mounted spotlights on it.

7 BE SUSTAINABLE

Incandescent lighting, the conventional bulbs we have used for decades, have the lowest energy efficiency. We like them for their warm glow, but compact fluorescent lamps are beginning to take hold because newer bulbs have a high color rendering, meaning they have a warmer quality. For your home, look for those labeled with a warm color temperature for living spaces, while a neutral temperature is a natural for areas like laundry rooms.

Are they dimmable? While more expensive, CFL bulbs built as such (not the kind that retrofit into an incandescent lamp) are, in fact, dimmable.

Light emitting diodes could become the primary light source, says Rey-Barreau. These long-lasting, energy-efficient lights are used in flashlights, Christmas lights, cell phones and traffic signals, but have been taking a smaller role in home lighting — thus far, that is.

The Energy Star program began labeling LED products late last year, and this is the first year LEDs are being manufactured for general interior lighting, says Rey-Barreau. "It has resulted in an explosion of interior lighting LED products."

Currently, these are primarily in the form of rope lighting, undercabinet lighting and the like, while the transformation of screw-base LED bulbs to fit conventional incandescent table lamps is just getting under way. If purchasing these, according to the American Lighting Association, look for the Energy Star label that ensures the bulb met testing standards.

LED lights are very expensive — at a minimum of \$100 each for a bulb, this can be a turnoff. However, because they are rated for 50,000 to 100,000 hours, even if left on eight hours a day all year, they may not need to be replaced for 25 years — a savings in the long run.

Three kinds of lighting

GENERAL LIGHTING provides an area of overall illumination. Also known as ambient lighting, general lighting radiates a comfortable level of brightness, enabling you to see and walk about. It can be accompanied with chandeliers, ceiling or wall-mounted fixtures, recessed or track lights, with lanterns outside your home.

ACCENT LIGHTING adds drama to a room by creating visual points of interest. Part of a decorating scheme, it is used to spotlight artwork, houseplants, or sculpture, or to highlight the texture of a wall, a doorway or a craftsman's fine detail. Accent lighting requires at least three times as much light on the focal point as the general lighting around it. This usually is provided by track, recessed or wall-mounted fixtures.

TASK LIGHTING helps you perform specific tasks, such as reading, sewing, cooking, homework, hobbies, games or balancing a checkbook. It can be provided by recessed and track lighting, pendant lighting and portable lamps. Task lighting should be free of distracting glare and shadows and should be bright enough to prevent eyestrain.

SOURCE: AMERICAN LIGHTING ASSOCIATION



How to buy

BE PREPARED Go to your retailer with measurements in hand, says Michael Lichtenstein of the Lighting Gallery. Measure everything from entries to the width of the dining table to the ceiling height. Common problems are buying lights that are too small or not leaving enough space for the proper fixture.

GO WITH PICTURES This will help determine the styles you like, the color palette, metal finishes that work, and whether there are space restrictions.

BE READY TO ASK FOR HELP You may not see what you want in the store, but chances are it is available.

— DONNA ROGERS

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