

Domestic Lighting - a Brief Guide

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Lighting can make or break a scheme. It can also affect your mood and life generally. Think how much better you feel when the sun is shining and the world looks and feels fresh and uplifting.

First a bit of jargon: *ambient lighting* provides general light for seeing around a space; *task lighting* helps you to fulfil a task and is usually switched independently when required (such as a pelmet light in a kitchen); *accent lighting* might highlight a room feature or piece of art (particularly pleasing when creating a cosy feel). *Decorative lighting* may fulfil a number of functions (for instance you may use a fancy table lamp as a task light to help you read) but is of itself an attractive item.



Typical British housing traditionally had a single pendant fitting in the middle of each room producing a dull, flat, yellow light; cheap to install, but hardly inspirational. People brought up in properties like this, consider it the norm. However, with some professional help, they are starting to see the light, so to speak. Wall sconces, spotlights, table and floor-standing lamps provide pools of light; these make a room interesting and are pleasing to the eye.



When planning a room we ask our clients to consider who will use the space and for what purpose. This informs the floor plan and furniture layout, which in turn dictates the electrical and lighting plan. For instance, if Dad sits and reads in the armchair while the kids are watching TV, we would provide him with a suitable light to help him read (and possibly a new socket for this to avoid trailing cables), which doesn't then interfere with TV viewing.

Natural daylight is the optimum solution, so if your scheme allows more natural light to penetrate deeper into the home, this is fantastic. We have recently installed a glass extension in one project and a skylight in another; not only do these give their living spaces an amazing lift, they transform the clients' ways of life and minimise the use of electric light. A glass extension also avoids creating darker spaces deeper in the property as would have been the case with a solid roof.

The key to a good lighting scheme is flexibility, allowing you to change brightness and mood. This will require a number of circuits for each space. We also tend to install 5 Amp circuits for convenience, so you can switch all the side lights on and off at the main wall switch. Remember to install 2-way switches where you may have two entrances to a space or two ends of a staircase. Dimmer switches also have a place in some rooms.

- Kitchen lighting should be bright when cooking so you can see well when handling knives and operating appliances; but in a kitchen-diner, you may switch to accents in the kitchen when you've moved to the dining table.
- In a bathroom, your electrician will fit lights with the appropriate ip ratings; consider different lights on separate circuits so that you can switch from practicality to relaxation.
- In a bedroom a main light is perfect for general visibility, but fit decorative lamps to provide a cosy and soporific feel. Task lights are also important for reading, and all should be controllable from the bedside.
- For a living room make sure that all lights can be switched easily from the doorway.
- For the hall stairs and landing, you may fit decorative pendants or chandeliers.



Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) have developed substantially in recent years, and we now install them as ceiling spotlights in place of halogen equivalents, wherever possible. They are produced in a number of whites (no longer just cold) so can replicate daylight or warm white if required. As spotlights, you need a few more to give the same coverage (lumens) and their capital cost is greater, but they use a fraction of the wattage of a traditional lamp. We have just completed a bathroom and cellar with just LEDs and they look great.



One thing to consider is whether you are interested just in the *effect* of the light (in which case don't make a feature of the light source), or in the lighting source itself. Why spend more on chrome recessed spotlights in a white ceiling, when quality white plastic will blend seamlessly: do you really want to highlight a load of holes? Similarly with sockets and switches; they should really be made to "disappear". We can even colour or pattern match sockets to certain backgrounds as here with this glass splashback:



If you are in the process of installing new lighting circuits, consider accent lighting; it can create a truly fantastic feel for a room. We tend to install lights on the tops of cabinets, in plant pots, behind sculptures or highlighting art. It is not an expensive addition yet makes an enormously positive impact on a space.



If you are having the house re-wired, consider having some CAT 5 or CAT 6 and aerial cabling installed at the same time, preparing the property for the future: for IT networks, hi-fi, satellite and internet TV.



We have installed lighting and electrical schemes in many of our projects. Our website is full of ideas and information, so please feel free to visit www.stylewithin.co.uk