

STORY BY PATRICIA WILSON

LIGHT IT UP!

Let function and style be the guides to making your home merry and bright.

Having good lighting in your home is significant because light has a powerful impact on our sense of well-being.

In nature, the bright sun, a guiding star and the moon's glow each serve a specific purpose. Sunrise and sunset provide a natural rhythm. Since ancient times, lighting candles has been part of rituals and rites of passage. Fireworks, birthday candles and holiday lights are part of our celebrations.

Light gives us guidance, direction and a sense of security.

LIGHTING BASICS

The basic categories of lighting are natural light, ambient light and task lighting. Natural light comes from sunlight pouring through windows and skylights; ambient light is general lighting from a combination of natural and artificial sources; and narrow-focused task lighting illuminates specific areas, such as those used for cooking, reading and hands-on work.

Besides these general categories, are more specific accent and specialty lighting. Accent lighting draws attention to something important, such as an object of art, and specialty lighting meets a specific need, such as being part of a home theater system.

Automated systems accessed through mobile devices allow us to control lighting, window shades and retractable awnings with the touch of a button. Sensors can adjust lighting as needed depending on whether a room is occupied. Dimmers and pre-set timers also help us reduce lighting costs.

LED lights offer efficiency and flexibility, especially outdoors. Many cities have outdoor lighting requirements to conserve energy and reduce light pollution, so it's

best to work with a professional.

SETTING THE MOOD

Consider the mood you want to set and styles that appeal to you.

Mood and atmosphere are affected by the intensity – bright to a dim glow – of light. The flicker of candles speaks of relaxation. Romance is enhanced by the soft light of a restaurant. A fire engine's flashing lights spark panic. Bright white stadium lights bring excitement. A well-lit work space generates enthusiasm.

Consider the fixture itself. A light fixture speaks to our sense of style and to our heart.

Fixtures with shimmering accents of metallic gold, silver and copper reflect opulence. For some, opulence is a fixture of sleek minimalism; for others it is a lavish cluster of faceted crystals.

Finely crafted fixtures express refinement. Craft is about appreciation for the artist. Artisan pieces include wrought iron, cage-like designs and hand-forged or blown-glass globes.

The use of woven materials, such as fibers and recycled plastics, is trending in light fixtures. Wire, wicker, mesh, crochet, wood beads and colorful crystals offer endless options.

Because lighting needs and options can be complex, it is best to work with a licensed interior designer or architect.

Don't underestimate the power of your own influence. Be a light! To quote the scholar Erasmus, "Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself." Our home is a reflection of ourselves. Home is where you shine!

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