



Lighting should follow the design of the space

By Lisa Duncan

When building or remodeling, many people wait to address lighting until the end of a project. Yet most lighting options should be weighed before an electrician arrives. A well thought-out plan ensures your objectives will be met. Plus, it helps your electrical contractor do a better and faster job by eliminating the guesswork. Here are things to consider:

Determine who will use the space and what they will do there.

Rooms are illuminated for multiple tasks and uses. Don't assume your electrician knows how the space will be used – let your plan communicate the details. For example, when hanging pendant lighting over an island, consider how tall the members of your family are so that the proper pendant height (distance from bottom of the fixture to the surface of the island) is reflected in your plan.

Make necessary adjustments before drywall is up.

After framing is complete, walk through your space with your lighting plan. Do you want floor outlets? Will you want lamps on your mantel? The ideal time to make adjustments is before drywall is installed so the electrician can easily access the wiring. Changes made after walls are put up, flooring is laid or cabinetry is installed can be costly.

Open up cramped spaces with light.

When you're dealing with a small space, use light to open it up. Any type of a glow makes a room feel bigger and more inviting.

Include moveable light sources.

Your furniture can be rearranged – make sure your light can also be moved. Lamps and dimmers make light versatile and allow you to adjust the intensity based on the activity at hand.

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Look for new ways to light things.

Sometimes you don't want to see the light, only what it illuminates. New "invisible" fixtures like small directional lights can make a warm impact on artwork, portraits or something as plain as a blank wall.

Lighting should complement architecture and design.

Your light sources should be a reflection of a room's style and should emphasize its good qualities. Today's options are numerous so avoid lighting design styles that are contradictory to your space (e.g., if a space isn't modern, steer clear of contemporary fixtures and trims.)

Use recessed lights for clean, updated lines and plenty of light.

Today's smaller recessed fixtures are easier to install and fit better in tight areas than large can lights that some electricians still spec. Plus, a wide variety of baffles and trims make these lights sleeker and more attractive than older versions.

Working with a professional designer to create a comprehensive lighting plan ensures the lighting in your new space is functional, versatile, inviting and attractive.

Reach Lisa Sanford Duncan, interior designer, at sd12shine@sbcglobal.net. Lisa shares other lighting ideas at [HomeSenseKC](#) on Facebook.