

Interior-design course

PART 20: CREATE THE IDEAL LIGHTING SCHEME



'If you're thinking about redecorating, this is also the perfect time of year to reconsider your lighting. Think about the practical considerations first. Have you got enough sockets? Are both switches and sockets fitted flush to the wall? Has the function of the room changed – maybe you've started working from home? Have you moved the television to an opposite corner of the living room, which could mean the lighting is giving you a headache? Measure your ceiling height – there's no excuse for banging your head on a pendant! Think about the different moods you wish to create and, finally, before you buy new fittings, ask your electrician to survey the wiring.'

Deborah Drew

Deborah Drew (above), presenter of BBC TV's *DIY SOS*



Draw up a plan

Whether you're creating a lighting scheme from scratch or re-thinking your arrangements in one or two rooms, assess your space and decide what you want to achieve before calling in an electrician. Draw a plan of each room on graph paper and include fireplaces, windows, doors, recesses and radiators, along with the position of sockets, switches and ceiling fixtures. Then decide where you want the improvements to be made.

★ Consider the orientation of the room, as this will affect the amount of natural light coming in and even its colour. North-facing rooms receive less light and it will be bluer than the plentiful, golden light that comes into south-facing spaces.



A central ceiling light provides general lighting in the living room and can be used to make a statement.

Table and standard lamps illuminate specific areas.

Try Laura Ashley for traditional-style chandeliers and floor lamps. Sofa in Iguaza Verde, £38 per m, striped armchairs in Rio Verde, £28 per m, curtains in Albany Verde, £23 per m, KA International

- ★ Allocate areas for work or reading and note the darkest corners – there should be enough sockets for task lights, table or floor lamps in these areas.
- ★ Increase the number of power points to give you greater flexibility, so that you can rearrange or make changes to your scheme in the future.
- ★ Decide where you want recessed lights, if any, to be installed within shelves, cupboards or wardrobes

Hire an electrician

There are specific safety regulations to comply with when working with electricity. It is essential to use a registered electrician for rewiring, and you should discuss plans thoroughly before work commences. Discuss the finish with your electrician, too, to avoid

WHAT TYPE OF LIGHTING?

- ★ Ambient lighting provides overall illumination. It can come from wall or ceiling lights, track lighting or recessed spotlights.
- ★ Task lighting is focused on a smaller area to make activities such as reading, cooking or sewing easier. Examples include desk lamps, strip lights under kitchen cupboards to illuminate worktops, or a standard lamp in a reading corner.
- ★ Information lighting makes your environment safer, providing illumination for stairways, corridors, along exterior paths or above a doorbell, for example.
- ★ Accent lighting highlights specific areas or focal points within a room, such as a dining table in a kitchen-diner, or a mirror or picture in the living room.
- ★ Decorative lighting, such as wall sconces, candles or fairy lights, is designed to add atmosphere.

WHICH FITTING?



▲ Table lamp

Place a few around the room to create soft pools of light. Choose a shape, size and material to suit your scheme.

Kota table lamp, £39.50, Marks & Spencer



▲ Desk or study lamp

Direct light where it is needed and prevent glare. Go for jointed arms and a shade that can be angled.

Adjustable table lamp, £359, Marston & Langinger



◀ Wall light

Choose from a wide range of traditional and modern styles for a gentle, ambient light. The shape and material of the shade will control the reach and direction of light.

Fleur de Lys sconce, £399, David Canepa Lighting



▲ Spotlight

You can use spots individually or grouped on tracks to provide task or accent lighting. Good in bathrooms and kitchens.

Vienna four-light spot track, £29.99, Next



◀ Pendant

Use in the centre of a room for background lighting. It should direct light upwards and be combined with lamps at different heights. Choose from basic globes and lanterns to ornate iron or crystal chandeliers.

Florentine pendant, £350, Jim Lawrence



▲ Standard lamp

Place next to an armchair or sofa for task lighting. A useful addition if you want layers of light at different levels.

Floor lamp, £181, Jim Lawrence



▲ Downlight

Highlight work surfaces in kitchens or bathrooms, or provide accent lighting for pictures, ornaments or plants in living rooms.

Picture light, £78, Jim Lawrence



Uplighter ▶

This directs a soft light upwards, creating a gentle overall glow. It works best in a room with a high ceiling as it can cast shadows into the corners. Athenian Column uplighter, £149, Marks & Spencer



being left with messy wires. Mini-trunking, a plastic strip that's stuck to the ceiling or walls to hide cables, isn't nearly as good as having new wiring channelled into the plaster – although it's less expensive, it can be an eyesore. If rewiring is part of a major decorative overhaul, book your electrician in advance so re-plastering and drying times don't delay any subsequent work.

Consider zones in the kitchen

The kitchen is the hardest working area in the home and needs appropriate task lighting. Food preparation areas and island units should be lit from above, with recessed lighting installed in the ceiling and downlights or fluorescent tubes fitted underneath wall-mounted cabinets. If your kitchen includes a dining area, good ambient lighting should be incorporated into this space. Consider mounting uplighters on top of wall cupboards, or installing lights into the plinth of an island or directly into the floor for something a bit different. A good option is to connect the lighting in the dining area to a separate circuit and fit a dimmer switch, so that light levels can be altered according to where you are and what you're doing.

Create a flexible system

Lighting in a living room must be suitable for a range of activities and be able to create different moods. A flexible system incorporating ambient, task and



'Cooker hoods generally have lights built in, but there are various options for under-cupboard lighting. You can use a switch on the underside of the

cupboard behind the pelmet, or invest in swipe lighting, where the lights come on or off when you swipe your hand beneath them.'

◀ Use a mixture of fittings for different zones in a kitchen-diner, including under-cabinet lights and a pendant over the table.

Trettio downlights, £11.99 for three, Septim pendant (over table), £10.49, Fado pendant, £23, Ikea

accent options is essential. A pendant or chandelier in the centre of the room is good for background lighting; complement this with table or floor lamps to create pools of light around seating areas. Emphasise the best features of the room by directing additional light from uplighters, or by angling lamps on them. If you have an open-plan living area that's used for a variety of different activities, consider creating separate lighting circuits for each zone and have them wired up to a lighting control system, which enables you to adjust them all from just one location.

Highlight your dining table

A dining area should be bright enough for people to see what they are eating, but the lighting should be soft enough to create a relaxing atmosphere. The table is the focal point, so the main source of light should be above it. A rise-and-fall pendant or decorative chandelier suspended over the centre of the table is a good option, but make sure you position it at the right height – too high and it will cause glare, too low and it will be intrusive. If you have a long table, consider installing a line of several pendants or recessed downlights to illuminate the entire length. Make the overall look cosier by installing wall lights, placing floorstanding lamps in the corners of the room, or by putting table lamps on sideboards.



▲ Use a combination of wall lights, candles and a chandelier in a dining area. Layla pendant, £150, Laura Ashley



Table lamps dotted around a living room create a cosy seating area. Basisk lamp, £7.99, Ikea

CHOOSING A LIGHT SHADE

The size and shape of a shade affects the direction light travels and how far it is cast. The fabric texture affects the intensity and colour of light.

★ Empire shades are wider at the base and taper upwards, casting a pool of light downwards. They suit

both circular or candle-shaped table-lamp bases and floor lamps.

★ Coolie shades are shorter, wider versions of the empire style and cast light downwards over a broader area.

★ Square or drum shapes spread light above and below.

★ Bowl-shaped shades cast light evenly all around.

★ Shades made from rattan and paper create a muted glow, ruched silk casts more shadow, while glass shades intensify light and are best for accent or task lighting.

What's best for bedrooms?

Floorstanding uplighters or wall lights fitted to dimmer switches will provide good overall light that can be brightened or softened. Provide a table lamp or wall-mounted light on each side of the bed, too, for reading. If you have a dressing table with mirror, light it with a wall light or table lamp on each side, so that light falls evenly.

Choose safe options for kids

Safety is an important issue in children's rooms, which makes some fittings unsuitable. Freestanding lamps are easily knocked over, so go for wall or ceiling lights instead. Use a dimmer switch if you want to make the transition into bedtime easier and, if your child is scared of the dark, buy a decorative lamp with a low wattage bulb that can be kept on until they're asleep.

Buy special bathroom fittings

Electricity is a major safety concern in rooms where there is water. Specialist recessed downlights and ceiling or wall-mounted fittings that are completely sealed are the safest option for general lighting. Fit them to a dimmer switch so the light can be toned down when you want to relax in the bath. Bright task lighting is essential for shaving, washing and applying make-up, so invest in a mirror with a tube light fitted above it and wall lights on either side

Avoid glare in work areas

Natural light should be carefully controlled in a home office to reduce glare. Angle the computer screen away from the window and fit Venetian blinds, semi-transparent curtains or roller blinds so you can alter the amount of light entering the room. Use an uplighter for gentle, ambient lighting as it gets darker. Desk areas need good lighting to avoid eye strain: if you are using a computer, light should be angled to fall on the keyboard, not the screen; if you are writing or drawing, the light should fall on the page without shining in your eyes. Lamps with long, adjustable arms are useful as you can vary the height to change the spread and intensity of the light. ➔



Choose shades that cast light downwards for reading in bed. Bardot bed, £225, Valencia bedside table, £149, Next



'Bathroom lighting must comply with IP (Ingress Protection) ratings, according to the zone it is used in, from 0 (inside a bath or shower) to 3 (at least W0.6m x H2.25m away).'

◀ Use adjustable desk lamps that can be angled to direct light efficiently and use blinds to control natural light. Tertial work lamp, £5.99, Ikea

Lighting a mirror from ▶ behind looks striking in a modern bathroom. Clickstrip lighting system, from £75 per 50cm, John Cullen Lighting



▲ Illuminate a mirror from above with a traditional-style fitting. Chrome tube wall light, £76, Bathstore.com





◀ A pretty pendant light provides a focal point in a traditional hallway.

Eloyse five-arm chandelier, £175, Laura Ashley

Pick a style to suit your home

Fixed or recessed light fittings look great in modern hallways, while a pendant, lantern or chandelier creates a stylish focal point in a traditional setting. You can supplement a central light with wall-mounted uplighters in a narrow hallway to make it seem wider – a good trick for brightening stairways, too. If you have a spacious hallway, consider including a floorstanding light or adding a console table with an attractive table lamp on it, but be careful to keep the flexes safely out of the way

Use waterproof lights outside

Always make sure that the lights you intend to use outdoors have been specially designed to withstand exposure to the weather and have them professionally installed. A single light fitted over the front door, or lights recessed into steps and pathways are welcoming, help you find your way



For stockist details, see page 15



‘Tungsten bulbs are the most inexpensive and widely available, providing a golden tint. Pearl versions are softer and more even, while clear ones are brighter and ideal for task lighting.’



EUROPEAN CAR OF THE YEAR 2006

The official fuel consumption figures for the Clio range in mpg (l/100km): Urban 28.2 (10.0) – 54.3 (5.2) Extra Urban 46.3 (6.1) – 70.6 (4.0), Combined 37.7 (7.5) – 64.2 (4.4). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 117 – 179.

RENAULT CLIO

safely at night and can be a deterrent for burglars. If you cook and eat in the garden during the summer, invest in wall-mounted lights positioned on either side of the barbecue and use freestanding patio lights, lanterns and candles to provide a soft glow around the dining table.

ESSENTIAL CONTACTS

Christopher Wray (020 7751 8701; www.christopher-wray.com) is the largest independent lighting retailer in the UK.

GB Lighting (www.gblighting.co.uk) sells a wide range of traditional and modern lighting via its informative website.

John Cullen Lighting (020 7371 5400; www.johncullenlighting.co.uk) specialises in architectural lighting for the home and garden.

Laura Ashley (0870 562 2116; www.lauraashley.com)

has traditional lighting and decorative chandeliers.

National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) (01582 531000; www.niceic.org.uk) aims to protect consumers from unsafe electrical work and will help you find a NICEIC-approved installer.

The Electrical Safety Council (0870 040 0561; www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk) provides information and safety advice for homeowners.



Illuminate the garden with outdoor fairy lights, plus spotlights and uplighters. Footlitter ground light, £72, Maxispotter spotlight, £118, John Cullen Lighting

Feature Rachel Volp

NEXT ISSUE
CHOOSING FIREPLACES
AND HEATING



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