



Getting Started

You've worked hard to design your home to fit your style, but the rooms still don't have the charm or appearance you had hoped. It's likely that the lighting in the room is not correct. Lighting is one of the most important aspects of good home design. It is not only to light the world around us, but to help us to perceive colors and textures. Curtis Lumber's Lighting Designers in Ballston Spa & Ray Brook can help you to achieve the right lighting in your home.

Types of Lighting

Well lit rooms combine 3 types of lighting:

- General Lighting-** This lighting provides an area with overall illumination. Also known as ambient lighting, general lighting radiates a comfortable level of brightness, enabling you to see and walk about safely. It can be accomplished with chandeliers, ceiling or wall-mounted fixtures, recessed or track lights, and with lanterns outside your home. A basic form of lighting that replaces sunlight, general lighting is fundamental to planning the lighting in your room.
- Task Lighting-** Light that helps you perform specific tasks such as reading, sewing, cooking, homework, hobbies, games, or balancing your 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.
- Accent Lighting-** Add drama to a room by creating visual interest. As part of a decorating scheme, it is used to spotlight paintings, houseplants, and other prized possessions, or to highlight the texture of a wall, drapery or outdoor landscaping. 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.

Types of Lighting Fixtures

Once you have selected what you want to light, it's time to decide on how you will light it. The Lighting Center at Curtis Lumber's showrooms in Ballston Spa and Ray Brook have a variety of fixtures on display to let you pick something that suits your style. The types of fixtures you will see include:

- Chandeliers-** These hanging fixtures add sparkle and style to your dining room, bedroom, foyer, or over a living room grouping while giving you the general lighting you need for dining, entertaining, or other activities. Some are designed with downlights to provide task lighting for homework or table games, or to accent table settings. Chandeliers are the most popular residential lighting fixture because they create a focal glow that suggests intimacy. A dimmer may be used to alter the intensity.
- Pendants-** These fixtures are used to provide both task and general lighting. Equipped with shades or globes to avoid glare, they are suspended from the ceiling over dinette tables, game tables, kitchen counters, or other work areas. The use of a dimmer control gives you the flexibility to vary the light to suit the occasion.
- Ceiling Fixtures-** This type is usually used to provide general lighting. It is practical to use these fixtures in busy areas such as foyers, hallways, bedrooms, kitchens, baths, laundry rooms, playrooms, and dens. They are available with incandescent, fluorescent, and energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Wall-Mounted-** Frequently these fixtures are called sconces. They can furnish general, task, and accent lighting. Many are designed to match and supplement dining room chandeliers, or to provide hallway, bedroom, or living room lighting. Wall brackets are often used for task lighting at the bathroom mirror. They are available with a choice of incandescent, tungsten-halogen, and energy-efficient CFL bulbs.
- Track Lighting-** This versatile lighting can provide general, task, or accent lighting all at once in one flexible lighting system. You can move, swivel, rotate, and aim the individual fixtures in any direction along the track, giving you the versatility to change your lighting scheme when the need arises. You can also hang chandeliers and pendants from the track. Modern track lighting has different tracks and sleeker looks.
- Recessed Lighting-** If you need general, task, or accent lighting inconspicuously, choose this lighting. Installed in the ceiling with only the trim showing, recessed fixtures can be used anywhere in the home, including outdoors under the eaves. They are ideal for low-ceiling areas, and with a special adapter they can also be used in cathedral ceilings. They are available as downlights, adjustable accent lights, and wall washers in both standard and low-voltage current and a choice of incandescent, tungsten-halogen, and energy-efficient compact fluorescents.
- Undercabinet-** These specialty lights offer both task and accent lighting. Like the name indicates, they can be placed under kitchen cabinets to light a countertop. In a display cabinetry, they show off prized possessions. They include slim, energy-efficient fluorescents, miniature track lighting, and strips of low-voltage mini-lights.



Lighting Controls

Once the right fixtures are selected, it is important to decide on how you will turn your lighting on and off. Lighting controls give you the flexibility to design a lighting plan with multiple uses and decorative effects. Whether you choose an on and off switch or a sophisticated dimming system, how you control your lights is an important consideration.

Today's dimming systems enable you to lower the light level to conserve energy and increase bulb life, vary the mood of a room, alter the intensity of the light to suit the activity, and create and save a number of different lighting scenes in each room. Be sure to talk to your Curtis Lighting salesperson about how you would like to control the light in your next project.

Bulbs and Tubes

The fixture you choose will influence the type of light bulbs or tubes that are used. For years, the "A" type standard bulb was the most used style of lamp. In recent years, the focus on energy efficiency and development of new materials has caused a new surge in variety of bulbs on the market.

- Incandescent-** These bulbs are the oldest and simplest electric light source. They contain a wire filament inside a glass bulb. When heated electrically, the filament glows, producing light and heat. Incandescent bulbs are inefficient and have short life spans, but are inexpensive and the most popular light source for residences. They tend to cast a warm light which provides excellent coloring of human skin tones.
- Halogen-** Halogen bulbs are an upgraded incandescent bulb that offers 20% greater energy efficiency, longer service life and improved light quality. Most halogen bulbs are used for accent lighting but are increasingly being used for decorative or general lighting. They tend to cast whiter, brighter light than standard incandescent bulbs.
- Fluorescent-** Fluorescent bulbs and tubes create light by passing electricity through a gas, releasing ultraviolet energy which charges a phosphorus coating on the inside of the bulb or tube glass. This makes the phosphorus glow, or fluoresce, to produce light. Fluorescent bulbs and tubes create light very efficiently and last a long time, thus dominating commercial, industrial, and institutional applications. Two recent changes have made fluorescents more popular in residential homes. First, through improvements in the phosphorus coating, the color and warmth of the light given off has been improved. Secondly, with the development of compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL), fluorescents can fit in more fixtures, thus bringing their energy efficiency to many more light sources. When choosing a fluorescent, be sure to examine what color of light is given off. These bulbs come in a variety of color temperatures, from cool white through daylight.
- HID-** High Intensity Discharge bulbs generate light similarly to fluorescents. Electric is passed through a gas mixture giving off light. HID bulbs are mainly found in outdoor, industrial, and commercial applications.
- LED-** Light Emitting Diodes are the up-and-coming lighting technology. They are a solid state light source, basically, a chip embedded in a plastic capsule. When electricity is applied to the chip, it emits light. The light color is dependent on the chip's chemical composition, so light color can vary from cool white to warm white. LEDs are significantly more efficient than any other lighting because they use little power and are small. While still not fully mainstream, LEDs are now used for Christmas lighting, stoplights, and signage.

General Tips and Hints

Here are some tips to remember as you plan the lighting throughout your home:

- When deciding on the lighting for a room, consider these questions: What kind of mood should the lighting create? What different activities take place in the room? What decorative elements do you want to attract attention?
- In general, to create an inviting atmosphere use three to five light sources in every room.
- To simplify your decorating decisions, there are lighting collections available with the same finish and style for pendants, chandeliers, wall-mounted sconces, as well as floor and table lamps. Using fixtures from the same collection within a single room creates a unified look.
- To make rooms interesting, vary the height of the light sources in the room. The differing heights add depth and interest by creating separate areas of light and shade.
- Remember, because dark colors absorb light, you'll need to use more lighting in rooms decorated with dark colors than rooms with light colors.

Lighting Design

If you are thinking about changing the lighting in your home, it is worth a trip to The Lighting Center at Curtis Lumber in Ballston Spa or Ray Brook. Whether you need one fixture or a houseful, our skilled designers will put together the perfect lighting plan for your job.