

ASK THE DESIGNER: How to Choose the Right Light Fixture

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?What should we consider when looking for light fixtures??

Feel free to send me your comments or questions to askjean@nichedecor.ca

One of the best ways to give your space a facelift is to change out the light fixtures. But how do you know which light fixture is right for your space? There are so many different styles, and if you're not sure what you're looking for, it can be enough to make your head spin. A well-chosen light fixture can change the whole feel of a room, making it bright and cheery, moody and romantic, or anything in between. A combination of several different fixtures will give you the flexibility to control the light in a room, adapting to your needs as you use the space in different ways. So where to begin?

Function

? Begin one room at a time, and make a list of all the different things you like to do in that room. Do you read? Entertain guests? Watch TV? Work on the computer? You will need different lights to address each of these tasks.

? Kitchens and bathrooms require multiple light sources. Many tasks are performed in these two areas, and they need bright ambient light as well as focused task lighting.

? Lighting in the bedroom should be focused on creating an air of calm and relaxation. Bedrooms need soft ambient light, and some focused task lighting for reading. For example, the ceiling fixture could be something with a shade around it to diffuse the light and take the edge off. For reading, you can either go with a beautiful pair of lamps on the bedside tables, or perhaps some swing-arm wall sconces on each side of the bed.

? Make note of the hanging height of ceiling fixtures before you make your purchase. Generally speaking, you want to leave around 84" minimum from the bottom of the fixture to the floor to avoid door swings and taller people walking into them.

? Lights hung over dining tables are different; you want them to sit a little lower so that they relate to the table, and do not appear to float up at the ceiling. 27-30" from the top of the table to the bottom of the light fixture is a good rule of thumb.

Form

There are tons of different styles available out there, so you should have no difficulty in finding something to suit your design preferences. Traditional, modern, contemporary, transitional, rustic... it's all there. Take your pick. The question to ask yourself is: do I want to make a bold design statement with my lighting choices, or do I want them to blend into the background and just do their job?

Consider Scale

A common mistake that we have often seen many people make, is ignoring scale. If you have a two-storey grand foyer, you should not have a 10" pendant light hanging from the ceiling. A light fixture needs to look proportional to the space it's in. When the light is too big, it looks over-bearing, and when it's too small, it looks lost.

Trends

This lighting article wouldn't be complete without a note on style. Lighting is often said to be jewelry for a room, and I for one couldn't agree more. It adds that sparkle, and when chosen well, it can make the whole room. We are huge fans of the current 'trend' towards different materials and textures in light fixtures. Many are moving away from the resin and plastic finishes, and bringing in woods, metals, and glass. Distressing lends a softened, time-worn appeal, and plays nicely with any of these aforementioned materials.

This trend is a classic and it can be successfully integrated into anyone's personal style. It blends nicely into a traditional look, and can give softness and character to a modern look.

As always my recommendation would be to consult a professional and make a purchase that is right in terms of what you need it to do, the look you want to achieve and having it be in scale with the space.