



Light up your



life

by Karen Lucas

Lighting is one of the most important elements of home decor – it can transform how we experience a room. Yet it is often added as an afterthought and, if not done right, can make even the most beautifully decorated home look bland and soulless.

Don't worry if you've been stuck with someone else's lighting afterthought – there are options for lighting makeovers that don't involve major remodelling. Here are some ideas to get you started.

First, decide what kind of mood and ambience you want to create. Higher levels of light usually create a more cheerful mood and stimulate alertness and activity while lower lighting tends to create an atmosphere of relaxation and intimacy.

Then, take note of the room's dimensions, décor and furniture layout; all these factors will affect your choice of lighting. Unattractive lighting fixtures such as ceiling or wall-mounted lights can ruin the look and feel of a room, especially if they're at odds

with the theme of your décor, but they may be easy to change.

Ask your nearest lighting store what your options are; you'll probably be amazed by the choices available, from up-lighting and down-lighting to strip-lighting and chandeliers. Ceiling fans are especially useful in our climate and can easily replace existing lighting fixtures. We replaced overhead lights with ceiling-fan and-light combinations in the master bedroom and on the balcony – what a difference it made to our lifestyle! Your lighting store should be able to recommend an electrician to carry out the installation.

Choose a fitting that suits your décor and the purpose of the room. As ceiling lights are usually the main light-source in a room, they should cast a soft, indirect, general light around the space (unless you're specifically aiming for a more dramatic effect).

Having only one general light source can make a room feel a bit bland, so liven it up by introducing accent lamps (table or floor-standing) to draw the eye to statement pieces such as

artwork or to wash a feature wall with light. Accent lights create a soft, warm ambience and add atmosphere to the room, providing contrast to the general lighting.

To create specific activity areas, for reading or computer work, for example, introduce task lights – usually table lamps – which are specifically designed for their purpose. In a study, indirect light is best if you work on a computer, as light is directed up to the ceiling, for example, and then bounced back to create a large, soft light source that minimizes glare on the computer screen.

Install a dimmer switch to let you control the lighting level in a room and create different moods instantly; both fixed and free-standing incandescent lighting as well as some halogen and fluorescent lights can accommodate a dimmer switch. The flexibility of having a dimmer switch is especially useful in the living-area, where you may want brighter light for some activities such as family time with the children and softer light for other activities such as watching TV.




Enhance small spaces by lighting the perimeter of the room with track lighting or floor-standing *torchieres* hidden behind cabinets and other furniture. As the lighting will be hidden, you could use inexpensive solutions.

For a more modern and funky look, introduce coloured lighting: replace clear light bulbs with coloured bulbs, change neutral lampshades to colourful ones or use coloured gels. Or go wild with the latest LED lights to highlight bookshelves, mirrors or any other piece you want to feature. Other current favourites are chandeliers (or lampshades with dangling pieces of crystal), colourful decorative lamps and the popular *Chinoise Chérie* style of lamps (an interesting mix of Chinese and French styles, often in red and black).

Finally, you can emphasize attractive indoor plants with portable

spike spotlights or planter lights embedded in the soil. These add interest to the overall lighting while showing off the colours, shapes and textures of your plants.

Don't be afraid to experiment. A lighting makeover could be just what you need to make your rental apartment look and feel like home. 

Lighting terms explained

Accent lighting: Mainly decorative. Used to highlight works of art, plants and other elements of interior design or landscaping.

Down-lighting: The most common method of lighting a room. Fixtures in the ceiling cast light downwards.

Task lighting: Concentrated light suited to tasks such as reading and sewing.

Torchiere: Also called a torch lamp. A floor-standing lamp which uses halogen or fluorescent light bulbs and has a tall stand usually made of wood or metal.

Track-lighting: Light fixtures attached anywhere along a continuous track device, such as a row of spotlights attached to one device.

Up-lighting: Less common than downlighting. Fixtures are positioned away from the ceiling and light is directed upwards to bounce off the ceiling and back down. This reduces glare on computer screens and other shiny surfaces and creates a more uniform lighting effect.

Know your light bulbs

Fluorescent bulbs produce light by running electricity through a glass tube. They cost more upfront, but are very energy-efficient and long-lasting. In the past, the light cast by fluorescent bulbs was unattractive, but new developments in technology have led to improved colour casts, so fluorescent lights are becoming more popular.

Halogen bulbs are a modern version of incandescent bulbs. They use thermal radiation from a hot tungsten element to produce light so they burn more brightly and show off colour better than other bulbs.

Incandescent bulbs create light by running electricity through a tungsten filament that glows when it gets hot. They are good for general use as they are cheap and widely available, but they are energy-inefficient as 90 percent of the energy is given off as heat rather than light.

LightCraft is situated at 131 Jalan Sultan. For more information call 6297 6658.