

BY LISA EVANS, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN March 13, 2014



Start your lighting plan with the basic layer of ambient lighting. Pot lights in the ceiling or a hanging light fixture make the room visible, allowing everyone to see where they're going, says interior designer Linda Nolan.

OTTAWA — Good lighting plays an integral role in setting the mood of your home. The right amount of light, properly placed, can add warmth to a space and create an inviting ambience. Interior designer Linda Nolan always incorporates three to four sources of lighting in her room designs, creating a layered effect.

“One light fixture in the ceiling is never enough to properly light a space,” she says. Layering light sources allows you to designate areas of the room for different purposes. Follow these design tips to choose the right lighting for your space.

1. Make a plan. Before picking out light fixtures, Nolan asks clients to consider the function of the space. Will the kitchen table be used only for eating or will children sit there to do their homework? Do you want to read in the living room or only watch television? How the space is used will dictate the type of lighting required and where it should be placed.

2. Ambient lighting. Start your lighting plan with this basic lighting layer. Pot lights in the ceiling or a hanging light fixture make the room visible, allowing everyone to see where they're going.

3. Task lighting. The next layer of lighting is specific to the activities your family does in the space. A pendant lamp over a game table, a swing-arm lamp beside your favourite reading chair or wall sconces behind the sofa are ways to bring light into specific areas of the room where you perform your daily activities.

Task lighting provides an opportunity to be creative and add a sense of fun and fashion to the space. Hera Arevian, owner of Arevco Lighting, often completes commission requests for clients who want to incorporate sentimental pieces into their lighting. She once made a table lamp with a boy's first pair of skates as the base. Choosing lighting fixtures that reflect your personality is a great way to add interest and emotion to your decor.

4. Accent lighting. This final layer of lighting allows you to direct the eye to the objects or architectural features in the room you find most visually appealing. Track lights to highlight a favourite painting or cabinet lighting to illuminate an entertainment unit draw the eye toward the areas in your home you want to show off.

5. Install dimmer switches. By controlling the intensity of the bulb, dimmer switches help to set the mood in a room. Dimmers should be installed in every room to allow for maximum control, says Nolan.

6. Switch to LED. Popular for their energy efficiency, environmental friendliness and long lifespan, LED bulbs have changed the way we think about lighting. Because of their long lifespan, many manufacturers are now making fixtures with built-in LED lights, giving consumers a wider range of lighting options to match more modern design styles.

“It's allowing for fixtures to look very minimal,” says Arevian.