



everything is  
*illuminated*

A designer and a colour expert shed light on the most commonly overlooked decorating detail.

Any designer worth their salt will tell you that lighting is one of the most essential ingredients for a well decorated space — not the afterthought that many of us consider it. The right lighting has the power to completely transform the way a room feels, lift your spirits and make you more relaxed or productive.

However, because great lighting design isn't necessarily as obvious as other elements in a space, such as wall colours, furniture, flooring, window treatments and statement decorative accessories, it often gets forgotten about until everything else has been decided upon. By this point, the budget has usually been spent elsewhere and you can't afford to do it justice.

Interior designer Anna Major of Haus of Design ([www.hausofdesign.co.nz](http://www.hausofdesign.co.nz)) says there are a number of reasons why it's crucial not to leave lighting to the end of the design process. "Lighting is an element that affects your senses, so to not value it highly in the building phase is a really common oversight. If the space feels dark and poorly lit, it will ultimately impact how you live in the space and how you enjoy being in it."

If lighting is an aspect that you don't feel confident planning for yourself, Anna stresses that it's especially important and worthwhile to make sure your electrician is good at planning and has a good understanding of what is out there in the marketplace. "And if you aren't sure that the electrician is quite understanding your vision, then it would be best to engage an interior designer to make sure your feature and task lighting are appropriately planned."

"While it's not impossible, it is definitely more difficult and expensive to make lighting changes once the house is lined," she says.

Another reason is that lighting plays a big role in how your chosen paint colours look. Even if your room is well lit by natural light, you can still run into some serious decorating challenges if you're not taking that lighting into consideration when you're picking out your paint colours.

"For a lot of people, there is still the idea that using the same colour internally in all of the rooms will be the safe way to go," says Resene Colour Expert Carolyn Atkinson. "There is the expectation that if a colour looks perfect in one room it will be exactly the same in all rooms. But due to the directional aspect of natural light and its effect upon colour — yes, even true white — and how differently each direction makes a room feel, this generally isn't the case."

You can't always bend your natural lighting conditions to your will with your colour choices, either. To try and make dim or cool rooms look warm, sunny or inviting, Carolyn says it's common for homeowners to choose soft yellows or crisp clean whites.


"However, in a south facing room, soft yellows can alter to a green or sour tone that doesn't achieve the desired effect, and the white can look grey and icy instead of fresh and bright. Resene Quarter Moonbeam is a good example of a yellow that can pick up a sour or green tone in easterly or southerly light." But under >



**Opposite:** Changes in both natural and artificial lighting levels can drastically change the mood of even seemingly neutral hues and go a long way in affecting the overall energy of your space. Wall in Resene Eighth Canterbury Clay, floor and bedhead in Resene Eighth Joss, room divider in Resene Eighth Pavlova, side table in Resene Parchment and tall vase in Resene Beethoven. Pause Voile curtains in Naturalle from the Resene Curtain Collection (available for ordering from your local Resene ColorShop or selected curtain specialist), bedlinen, cushions, rug, art and purse from Mood Store.

**Above:** Soft pink walls are both flattering and practical for areas where you're grooming — especially if you're applying makeup. Back wall in Resene Loblolly with Resene FX Paint Effects medium coloured with Resene Half Gull Grey, front wall in Resene Sakura with Resene FX Paint Effects medium coloured with Resene Quarter Blanc, floor in Resene Mercury, skirting boards and desk in Resene Snow Drift and storage boxes in Resene Snow Drift and Resene Sakura. Pause Voile curtains in Naturalle from the Resene Curtain Collection (available for ordering from your local Resene ColorShop or selected curtain specialist), ottoman from Freedom Furniture, lamp from Good Thing, mirror from The Warehouse, sculpture from Good Form, rug from Grounded Homeware, art by Brenda Clews.

 Resene Beethoven

 Resene Loblolly

**Below:** Back wall in Resene Dark Slate, front walls in Resene Hermitage and Resene Destiny, trims in Resene Sea Fog, plywood floor in Resene Colorwood Whitewash, pendant light and vase in Resene Zumthor, desk in Resene Destiny, round boxes in Resene Dark Slate, Resene Hermitage and Resene Zumthor. Rug from The Ivy House, mirror from Bo Concept, stool from Nood, art by Grace Popplewell from endemicworld.

-  Resene Destiny
-  Resene Colorwood Whitewash

Resene Sea Fog

Resene Zumthor

Resene Hermitage

other lighting conditions, it can be fresh and fun.

In the case of complex neutral colours, the underlying base tone like yellow ochre, brown umber or orange may suddenly take a warm, inviting beige or taupe tone and turn into something dirty, sludgy or moody. Too much low westerly sunlight can bring up the dirty tone while too little sun coming from the north can grey off the colour, because the light comes in from higher in the sky and makes shadows on the walls. Resene Bison Hide, for instance, is a gorgeous complex neutral, but it can look sludgy in light coming in from the south or west.

“Without careful testing of large swatches – which should be A2 size, at minimum – and watching how the predominant source of natural light works with or against the colour, there is the very real chance of it being a disappointment.”

This is true also of paint on the exterior, says Carolyn. “I recently wrote to a homeowner who said that her exterior colour looked perfect except on the front of her house, which had a westerly aspect. She thought that some chemical reaction to the paint that she was using was the reason the pale cream she’d chosen looked peachy and her beige looked khaki. It can be difficult explaining that there is nothing wrong with the paint or the colour, but some people are surprised when they see just how much a hue can change in natural light.

“There really are no shortcuts to finding the right colour. Bringing home Resene testpots to see the hue in situ is the only way to go.”

While natural sources are one component, the artificial lighting that will be in your space is another factor entirely, so it’s highly recommended that you

have your electrical plan in place before making the final call on colour.

“Paint colours are far more adaptable than lighting colours,” says Anna, “so I would definitely approach it that way around.

“The advantages to picking the lighting first is that you can factor in practicalities. Doing it this way means that you need to be considered about your paint choices, but you’ll have a huge wall of options at your Resene ColorShop to choose from to get that right.”

If you do need to select your paint before your lighting, Anna suggests heading to your local lighting showroom with your paint samples. “They can demonstrate some good examples of different lighting tones to see how they affect your paint selections.”

### It’s all in the mix

Different spaces call for different lighting, and that can vary greatly between the places in your home where you get ready, where you revel and where you relax. Unless the room you’re lighting is a literal closet, you’re going to need more than one source of artificial lighting in it.

It’s best to take a layered approach to illumination, starting with your ambient overhead lighting then mixing in more directional and specific accent and task lighting. “That way the space will mould to your requirements at different times of the day,” says Anna.

In a living or dining room – which, thanks to the popularity of open plan layouts, are often located within the same four walls these days – it’s ideal to start with a large ceiling fixture above central points of activity, such as the sofa or dining table. Then, look toward the outer walls for downlighting that can gently wash the walls, curtains and art with warm, functional brightness. This can be achieved with soffit or valance lighting, or even upward facing floor lamps that bounce light off the ceiling.

Depending on your room’s layout, accent lights could be used to highlight art while table lamps could be placed beside seating to add another layer of light to turn on when reading and socialising. And for extra ambience, a few candles never hurt.

“For bathrooms, task lighting in front of your face is always a good option, and the rest of the room needs to have strong lighting in terms of lumens,” says Anna. “I like having natural white LED lights in bathrooms as it has a nicer feeling than a direct cool white.

“For media rooms, you will still want to have a small amount of light in there so having some low level LED

### top tip

Your paint’s sheen level will also pick up lighting differently. Gloss finishes will reflect more light and the colour will seem brighter while low sheen and flat finishes will diffuse the light and the colour will seem deeper. You can use this to your advantage – a glossy front door will be eye-catching, while a flat deep finish in a bedroom will be cocooning.

Resene Dark Slate 



**Right:** Some lighting conditions can make certain colours read as completely different hues. In this moody living room, the Resene Space Shuttle floor visually reads as brown. But in other spaces, it looks definitively grey. Walls and arch vase in Resene Monkey, floor in Resene Space Shuttle, plant stands in Resene Kilamanjaro (tall) with pot in Resene Kabul and Resene Americano (short) with pot in Resene Space Shuttle, books in Resene Kabul and Resene Space Shuttle, tall plant pot on shelf in Resene Felix and tiny vases in Resene Americano and Resene Double Felix. Sofa from Me & My Trend, rug from Freedom Furniture, throw and square cushions from H&M Home, round cushion from Country Road.

 Resene Monkey

Resene Kabul

Resene Bison Hide

*Use mirrors to help reflect more light back into spaces that are painted in dark hues.*

strip lights is a really nice option as it floods the floor with a gentle soft light, but it won't distract from your TV or media unit."

One room where brightness should be more important than ambience is the kitchen. Try installing recessed lights along the edge of the ceiling to flood the space. If you have a kitchen island, consider hanging pendants overhead, which will light the space without taking up room you might need to eat or prepare food. Also, you'll have straight sightlines to your guests without having to bend and peer around a hanging light.

And don't forget under-cabinet lighting: running LED light strips on the bottom of your upper cabinets is the easiest way to create an evenly lit counter space for food prep and cooking.

### A bit about bulbs

The last piece of the lighting puzzle is the bulbs (or 'lamps') that you use in your fixtures or light fittings.

"The Correlated Colour Temperature (or CCT) of lamps can have an impact on how the light reflects and portrays your paint colours within a space. A lower CCT of 2700-3200 kelvins creates a warm and cosy feel, presenting wall colours with yellow and orange undertones. A higher CCT, such as 4000-5500 kelvins, creates a cooler more energising effect, producing white and light blue undertones. Keep this in mind when you are selecting LED lamps for your light fittings," explains Julia McKerrow of Lightingplus ([www.lightingplus.co.nz](http://www.lightingplus.co.nz)).

"The lower the CCT, the warmer the light effect will be. With darker paint colours, you won't notice the light effected undertones I mentioned. However, you will need approximately 30-50% more light to achieve the same light levels as compared to lighter paint colours.

"It's also important to identify the suitable maximum



Resene Space Shuttle

Resene Felix

Resene Double Felix

Resene Kilamanjaro

lamp wattage in any given light fitting. If you exceed the maximum wattage, there is a high risk of shortening lamp life, premature failure or blowing an electrical circuit. The new low wattage, energy-efficient LED options available help to minimise these risks. All light fixtures should have maximum lamp rating labels so you can identify lamp type and wattage."

### Find experts you trust

"Interior designers are really worth talking to also if you are trying to pull together paint, lighting, flooring, etc.," says Anna. "This is something we do all day, every day so we can definitely save you all that time researching products, lighting and paint when we have all that information at hand.

"You should also hire a good electrician. They should be able to guide you through a few options and possibly show you some examples for lighting."

"Beyond that, being really clear in your own mind about how you like to use each space, which colours make you feel calm and how your house could best serve the way you live is really helpful for making your decorating decisions. If you are clear on that, then choosing lighting and colours should feel natural and easy." **H**

**styling and projects** Kate Alexander, Vanessa Nouwens, Melle van Sambeek  
**images** Bryce Carleton

### did you know...

Different painted surfaces receive different amounts of light because of the way light falls? Since ceilings are more in shadow than other parts of the room, if you want your ceiling to look lighter than your walls, choose a half or quarter strength of your wall colour. If you use the same colour as your walls, your ceiling will look darker.

 Resene Americano