

The Lighting Scheme

EVERY DESIGNER HAS HIS OR HER OWN RULES FOR DEVISING THE IDEAL lighting scheme. Some say all the fixtures in a given room should be at the same height; some insist that all fixtures be installed on different circuits so they can turn on or off independently; some decree that every room needs to have X number of fixtures; some say the principal source of light should never be overhead; some feel that every fixture needs to be on its own dimmer; and so on.

What most designers agree on is that the fixtures you place in a room are important both because they're part of the larger mix of things you see, and because they establish the *way* you see everything in the room. It's hard to reduce developing a lighting scheme to a list of rules; each room demands its own particular plan, based on several factors: the height of the ceiling, the exposure to natural light, the color of the walls, the style of the architecture, the room's ultimate use, and your own personal preferences for bright or low light. If you have a great room with double-height ceilings, you'll likely want a big pendant or chandelier for some grand illumination; if your master bedroom has three walls of windows, maybe you won't feel the need for anything more than a couple of reading lamps.

"I use lighting as a design tool," says designer Charles Pavarini III. "I do not use it to illuminate a space, I use it to enhance a space, to bring in drama and different moods. Lighting is extremely important—without it, you could create the most beautiful floor plans and furnishings and fabrics, but if it's not lit well, you will not be able to clearly see your design intent. Everything will become very jumbled."

Each home or apartment comes with the very bare bones of décor, and that includes lighting. "The builder has to provide, by code, illumination," says Pavarini. "But they don't know the flavor of the room. They don't know how the end user is going to design the room. So what they usually do is put a recess [a fixture sunk into the ceiling] in each corner, so you can

Natural light was top priority when designer Steven Gambrel began planning this Sag Harbor kitchen, so the multiple ceiling-mounted task lights—lined up along the counter's edge—were meant as a function-focused companion to the wall of windows and the skylight.



turn on a switch and enter the room." It's not unlike how most homes feature bare white walls; there's nothing wrong with white walls, nor is there anything wrong with recessed overhead lighting. The question is whether these things suit what you intend to do with your room.

"I always like to have different types of lighting," Pavarini says. "A mixture of recessed lights, sconces, floor lamps, and table lamps gives depth to the room." The recessed fixture might be standard-issue, but it's still useful; Pavarini prefers a smaller, pinpoint recessed light as opposed to the more commonplace canister style. He is drawn to sconces because they add not only light but ornament, and it's easy to find one (modern and streamlined, or bejeweled and embellished) that complements the room's overall aesthetic. With respect to floor and table lamps, Pavarini cautions you to think about the shade as much as the lamp. "Make sure that the shade doesn't direct the light up and down only," he says. "A silk shade, or a fabric that mimics silk, illuminates very well."

Pavarini offers another piece of advice that's very easy to implement. "Across the line," he says, "always use dimmers, because then you have complete control over your environment. You don't need to be a millionaire to get some of these lighting effects. Put dimmers in everything, and then play with the different levels of light, and see how it changes the room."

"Lighting is so experiential," agrees David Netto. "You can't learn it from the Internet or reading *Elle Décor*. You have to learn it from seeing it in action. Go to La Grenouille in New York and look at all the pleated lampshades on the tables and tell me the lighting's not the most important thing in the room . . . the whole experience is delivered in those lights."

OPPOSITE > Designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard was going for pure shock value when he dreamt up this floating constellation of Moooi Random Lights, all set to a dramatic scale.

FOLLOWING PAGES > Tall and narrow, with the ability to slip into awkward and tight spaces, a well-placed floor lamp creates intimate ambience, while focusing light where it's needed most.