

LIGHTING d e s i g n

By Larry Kushner, Interior Designer
Member A.S.I.D., State License # ID 0000540



I was recently asked to advise an interior design client on lighting for family room. Like most family or great rooms, it has multi-purpose uses during the day and evening. Well lit with natural light during the day, the room has east-facing French doors and side-lights along with a dining area that has seamless bay windows, as well as west-facing clerestory windows. Aside from cloudy or overcast days, the room's ambient natural light rarely needs additional interior lighting during the day. However, the evening hours posed a concern.

The only light source in the family room was its recessed lighting in the ceiling. While recessed lighting is an excellent source for general or ambient lighting, it can lack warmth and intimacy when used alone. I prefer to use a combination of light sources. In my opinion, nothing can warm up a room like lighting from multiple sources. First, think of introducing table lamps, which will provide decorative enhancement while also adding a new dimension to the lighting plan.

Wall sconces and hanging pendants, along with accented art lighting, can bring a warmth that recessed lighting alone cannot.

We kept an existing multi-armed chandelier over the dining table to provide both general and task lighting for that area. However, in the great room the existing recessed lighting had outdated "flood" bulbs which we changed to dimmable compact fluorescent flood lamps. Until recently, these were not available and

only non-dimmable bulbs were on the market. These compact fluorescent bulbs give off the same warm lighting that the old ones did but are much more energy-efficient. We also added recessed, low-voltage lighting to niches in the drywall built-in and Slimline art lighting to existing artwork above the sofa and dining area walls, along with a pair of sconces on opposing sides in both the dining and sitting areas. Two table lamps, one next to the sofa, one next to a chair and ottoman, now provide reading light, along with a floor lamp with shade at the opposite end of the sofa. The overall effect is that we have enhanced existing recessed lighting with task and accent lighting to create a more dramatic, functional and visually interesting space.

Finally, I always advise my clients to install dimmers. Not only do they allow you to control the brightness of the lighting, but they are also energy-saving devices. Remember to purchase high quality dimmers, such as Lutron, to avoid the "humming" noise from lower quality dimmers. Also select dimmers that are compatible with the type of light source, and be sure not to exceed the maximum wattage recommended for that dimmer, typically 600 watts.

Have a design question?
Contact Larry Kushner at
Larry@larrykushnerdesign.com.
He may not be able to answer each inquiry, but look for a reply to your question in next month's issue of Flavor.