

Home Improvement

# How to Create Mood Lighting: The Secret of a Romantic Ambience at Home

By Jennifer Geddes | Feb 11, 2019



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Mood lighting: We all know it's a must for dinner dates, but what's the best way to achieve this alluring ambience in your home?

Mood lighting can be crafted from many different types of lights; but the only kind that won't work is a harsh overhead fluorescent. After all, this isn't high school—or prison.

— ADVERTISEMENT —



"You can create a mood with lamps, sconces, pendant lights, backlights, under-cabinet lights, and even rope or twinkle lights, when well applied," explains **Drew Henry** of Design Dudes.

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- [Throwing Shade: How to Pick the Perfect Lampshade for Any Room](#)

Here's more on how to create mood lighting, focusing on the types of lights and bulbs, lampshades, smart tech, and more.

## How to create mood lighting



What is mood lighting?

Photo by Amgad Kamel Interiors

Although most lighting looks white, it actually comes in thousands of subtle hues, from warm to cool. And warm hues definitely win if you're angling for an intimate vibe. To judge the degree of warmth, check out the Kelvin temperature scale, which is listed on the bulb's package and ranges from 1,000 to 10,000.

"Temperatures that are between 2,700 to 3,000K tend to emit a warm, yellow color, while midrange temps between 3,500 and 4,100K appear cool neutral or white," explains **Josh McCormick**, vice president of operations at Mr. Electric, an electrical services company.

Basically, "warm" light casts a cozy glow, as if you're sitting fireside—best for bedrooms, living rooms, and dining rooms. Cool light feels more like an office setting.

## Which bulbs offer the best mood lighting?



What is mood lighting?

Photo by Michelle Chaplin Interiors

In the past, incandescent bulbs were king, offering a warm light source.

"Then came energy-efficient CFLs, or [compact fluorescent lights](#), which were a much cooler color," says **Darla DeMorrow**, a home designer and author of "Organize Your Home With SORT and Succeed."

Now, LEDs, which were originally very cool but have become warmer, lead the pack.

"LEDs have come a long way and are by far the most energy-efficient of the bunch," says **Carole Marcotte** of [Form & Function](#). "There are even fun industrial filament-type bulbs in LED versions, and a warm one that's dimmable."

When choosing mood lighting bulbs, McCormick recommends the [Philips Dimmable](#) and the [Bulbrite 776609 7W LED](#).

## Mood lighting lamps and shades



What is mood lighting?

Photo by Jessica Buckley Interiors

Beyond the bulb, don't forget [lamps](#) and their shades if you're interested in establishing a softer tone. Translucent shades diffuse light throughout the room, although you could try an opaque one that directs light from the top down for a dramatic, moody look.

Mood lighting is best achieved when it comes from different levels and layers around your rooms, says DeMorrow.

"Uplighting from the floor, lamps at varying heights, and lights on crown molding are all great considerations," she adds.

And don't forget [furniture](#) lights! "Those small bulbs in your dining room hutch or entertainment center can create another level of mood lighting."

## How other elements in the room affect mood lighting



What is mood lighting?

Photo by Madison Modern Home

You should also consider your room's surfaces as you choose mood lighting.

"Flat paint absorbs light, while shiny colors in satin, semigloss and gloss reflect light back into the room," says DeMorrow. Upholstery generally absorbs light, but [mirrors](#) and metallic accents reflect it.

And always avoid overhead lights, says Henry.

"These fixtures are great when you need to see, but they really take away from any mood, so try to stick completely to [lamps](#), under-cabinet lights or even twinkle lights behind a sheer curtain," he says.

## Try smart bulbs and lighting apps



What is mood lighting?

Photo by 186 Lighting Design Group - Gregg Mackell

Dimmers are obvious go-tos, but to step it up a notch, get smart lighting, which can enable you to adjust the light levels from your phone or by voice command. They need not be that expensive—starter kits (with bulb, hub, and app) from industry leader [Philips Hue](#) start at \$34.99 and up, and can communicate with Alexa, Google Home, and other smart home speakers and assistants.

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