

## COMBAT WINTER DOLDRUMS WITH THE RIGHT LIGHT AND OUR LIGHTING GUIDE

Forget the cold! We're down these days because it's dark outside by 4:30 p.m. Our sadness is no surprise—research shows that a lack of light causes depression, impairs concentration, decreases productivity and dings cheerful moods. Fortunately, all that can change with a flick of the switch. The right kind of light does the opposite, alleviating depression and improving concentration, productivity, health and mood.

But not any light will do. As interior designers in Chicago, where days can be a full hour shorter than say Detroit because we're on the eastern border of a time zone, we can attest to the fact that it takes the right light to combat all of the above. Fortunately, we have lots of knowhow in this area thanks to Victoria Ellis, the brilliant lighting consultant we pull in on many of our projects.



*A comprehensive lighting plan starts by assessing and maximizing a room's natural light and architectural assets. Here, window treatments let natural light shine through and lamps cast light above and below their shades to accentuate elegantly wrought millwork. (Image: [Jessica Lagrange Interiors](#))*

We work closely with Victoria because light is such a critical part of our everyday lives that it should be considered before we put anything else in our homes. Ideally, that means while a place is still in the throes of design and construction. But few of us have the leeway to build our homes from the ground up or consider lighting before putting anything else in a room. So we play catch up, installing lights where we think they should be or think we need them.



*Layers of lighting, from recessed cans and decorative fixtures to task-oriented lamps, contribute to the comprehensive lighting plan of this vintage apartment. (Image: [Jessica Lagrange Interiors](#))*

Regardless of whether we're starting from scratch or backtracking to address inadequacies in the way a space is illuminated, the right light starts with a comprehensive plan that touches every room. Victoria helps us conceive it to blend substance and style. That means it fulfills the utilitarian objectives of everyday life, complements a home's decorating style and achieves the perfect balance between natural and artificial light in every room.



*Lighting should be used to define functions in a space and highlight treasured possessions. A contemporary chandelier adds style and utility to the table it crowns, while a table lamp illuminates prized art. (Image: [Jessica Lagrange Interiors](#))*

But like everything about our homes, the right light changes as our needs do, so we believe in seasonal check-ups. While we can't conjure up the long-lasting, mood-enhancing sunlight of a summer afternoon, we can do some seasonal adjustments room-by-room to make the most of the dark days ahead. We asked Victoria for her advice, and she helped us come up with a **Winter Lighting Guide** to make sure you have the right kind of light everywhere in your home to combat early-onset nights.

## JLI's Winter Lighting Guide

### Everywhere

**Up the light levels in every room with LED bulbs.** They are much lower wattage than traditional incandescent bulbs, so it's easy and often necessary to increase the lumen output yet still use less wattage. LED replacement bulb manufacturers such as GE and Cree list lumen data on the box or in online specification data. Keep in mind that 1000 lumens are roughly equivalent to a 75W incandescent bulb while 800 lumens are equal to a 60W incandescent bulb.

**Consider a bulb's color temperature.** It's measured in degrees of Kelvin (K) on a scale from 1000 to 10,000. In residential applications lighting temperatures range from 2000K to 6500K. We typically recommend 2700K, but if your space is contemporary or you prefer a slightly crisper white light choose a color temperature of over 3100K. Daylight starts at 4600K.

**Make sure the LED bulbs you use are dimmable.** They can be expensive (though they last longer) so test a few before making a wholesale change.

## Kitchen and Dining Spaces

**Evaluate all task lighting.** Since we prep and work in these spaces, task light is critical (or we risk chopping more than veggies in dim light). Evaluate the quality, quantity and location of all luminaires (fixtures). Can you replace a fixture that is not doing its job? Do you have under-cabinet task lighting?

**Check for variety and layers.** Can you mix and match sources by switching groups of lights on and off? What is on a dimmer? What could be on a dimmer? Almost all of us have room for improvement in these rooms.

## Living Rooms

**Review finishes.** The texture and hue of a surface can reflect light and have significant influence on the quality and quantity of lighting in a space, which can be critical in main living spaces. For instance, light walls have a reflectance value of 40 to 60 percent, while certain types of white paint can increase that number to 90 percent. By contrast, carpet has a low reflectance value of 15 to 30 percent.

**Consider bounce.** Light can be directed at white or light value ceilings and walls to create large diffuse light sources that can help battle the winter blues.

**Eliminate the "cave."** When light is directed down in the center of a space, or pooled in irregular pockets, it creates a cave effect. While variety and drama can make a space interesting, moodiness may not be best goal for this season. Illuminated walls and ceilings eliminate the cave effect.

## Bedrooms

**Add a lamp.** Does the ambient light level feel good to you here? This is your most intimate personal space, and the lighting level and color should work for you. Floor lamps, table lamps and task lamps for reading or desk work in double-duty bedrooms can be added and removed to suit your needs.

**Be in control.** You should be able to dim the light sources in the bedroom, especially those at the side of your bed that you use for reading (especially if there's someone else in bed who may be sleeping while you're reading).

## Bathrooms

**Control is critical.** The bedroom rule is even more important here, especially if you have a spa-quality space with a soaking tub or vanity and need to create different lighting conditions to gauge your appearance. You should be able to dim your sources of light in this private space.

**Face First.** While the entire bathroom is another bastion of personal space, the vanity is most critical. Do you have enough task lighting for your daily routine? Is it simply a bulb change or is the placement creating shadows that make shaving and cosmetic tasks tough? Consider changing the fixtures. Ideally, two translucent sconces on

either side of a vanity mirror at 1000 lumens (which is approximately 75W incandescent) will produce nice full illumination for your face and possibly delay the purchase of the magnified self-illuminated makeup mirror.

## Walk-In Closets

**Quantity and quality count.** Is that blazer black or blue? It's even harder to tell with tights or socks. Integrating lighting into millwork or right above shelves and closet rods is ideal. However, if you are limited to a central location in the center of the ceiling, make sure that the fixtures you choose provide a relatively high level of light in all directions (this is called omnidirectional). Glass, acrylic or translucent fabric fixtures allow the light to bounce around and off all surfaces.

**Keep the Color Rendering Index (CRI) in mind.** The CRI is the quantitative measure of a light source's ability to faithfully reveal color. It is rated on a scale from 1 to 100, and the lower the CRI rating, the less accurately you see color. The color temperature and color rendering ability of bulbs needs to be high level in your closet. Look for a CRI of 90 or higher and a color temperature above 3100K for the bulbs you use in your closet.



*With their sleek shape and ample wattage, dimmable LED sconces blend form and function to shed a broad swath of light where it counts on a vanity mirror. (Image: [Jessica Lagrange Interiors](#))*