



LIGHT WORK

words by Abby Warn of Light IQ

Well thought-out lighting can increase productivity, efficiency and ultimately create an enjoyable place to be.

Here we consider working from home and how appropriate lighting can benefit you. The placement of light sources, the control of natural and artificial light and the uses of lighting in a multi-functional room are all vital factors that must be addressed.

Popularity of working from home has risen in recent years. The speed of internet connections, teamed with laptops and mobile phones has made remote working easier, allowing many of us to enjoy the benefits that home working proffers. Whether you use your home office as your permanent place of work, or simply to sort out bills and write emails, office tasks require carefully considered lighting.

When setting up your home office, consider

the layout of the room, including all sources of ambient light such as windows. Plan where you intend to put your computer, printer and desk. If you are introducing an office space into an existing room, you may have to make do with adding to and improving the current lighting scheme, whereas if you are creating an office from scratch you will have more flexibility.

Concentrating for long periods of time in a poorly lit space can lead to eye strain, headaches, neck ache and fatigue. Light levels should be bright enough for important tasks such as reading and writing, but not too bright so as to create undue glare.

Good lighting is not just about bright lighting; the contrast of light, if unbalanced, can lead to just as many issues as dimly-lit areas. The eye can only react to one light level at a time, therefore lighting extremes

such as looking at a bright computer screen against a dark background can cause a number of negative symptoms. Lowering the brightness of the screen or increasing the light levels in the room can combat issues of contrast by reducing the difference in the light levels. Avoid placing a computer screen in front of a window as the contrast in LCD screen brightness and natural light can cause eye strain.

The most effective lighting schemes will include 'layers' of light, allowing you to customise your lit environment specifically for the task in hand. Levels of light may need to be adjusted as you move from mainly screen-based work to reviewing drawings, plans or documents. These layers can be separated into circuits, whereby the task lighting can be operated independently from the general lighting allowing you to maintain ambient light levels within



Mark Wilkinson Furniture Design, www.mwf.com, Tel: 01380 850004



Virtually Silent Sivoia QED Lutron Blinds from Light IQ



Ballfinger Standing Lamp, £415 from Howe London, www.howelondon.com, Tel: 0207 730 7987

the room, whilst focusing on specific areas of your office such as a desk or drawing board. Desk lamps are an instant way of highlighting certain areas for specific tasks. These can be combined into your lighting circuits or run independently.

The correct placement of your light sources is fundamental to achieve an effective lighting scheme. Ceiling mounted down-lights can be a great provider of general light, however placed directly above a desk will result in shadowing. Glare can also be a common problem, where poorly placed lighting reflects off shiny surfaces, computer screens or printed documents. Placing or directing light fittings to the sides of your work space can lead to better ambient lighting and will avoid dark spots from shadow. The picture above illustrates how directional downlights highlight the bookshelves whilst providing reflected light to the room. The picture light provides a second layer of light creating a decorative focal point to the room by accentuating the artwork and the desk lamp provides task lighting.

Desk lamps come in a variety of sizes and styles, ready to suit each type of office space. If desk space is tight, wall mounting a lamp with a level arch arm is perfect for an ultra-modern clutter free space.

Multi-use spaces, whereby your kitchen worktop doubles up as a place for homework, demand an appropriate use of lighting. Well placed lighting can help to provide a boundary between different tasks in a room. Bright and suitable lighting for your working day in your dining room can be altered when the room becomes a dinner setting in the evening. Having a particular pre-set in your lighting for office work with a separate pre-set for your evening meal, allows a division to be drawn between work and home life, making it easier for you to switch on to and switch off from your working day. Multi-task environments mean that your lighting has to contend with a variety of functions, often at a seconds notice. It must have the ability to change and alter as per your requirements and to do so seamlessly.

The best way to manage your lighting is by using a pre-set control system, which allows you to set different 'scenes' depending on the task in hand. A control panel can be either wall mounted, wireless or remote control operated, making adjustments to your lighting quick and easy to achieve. The purity of natural light cannot be beaten, however using natural light to its full advantage means being able to control it. Sunshine can be a real mood-enhancer however reflections, glare and heat can lead to an inefficient workplace. Automated blinds and curtains not only act as a stylish and luxurious feature to any office, but can be operated remotely or automatically. Light sensor blinds will rise and fall with the natural pattern of the sun, managing the amount of sunlight that floods your office, preventing light contrasts which cause discomfort. Automated blinds are a time saving addition to any room, keeping the ambient temperature cool and operating with virtually silent motors.

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As your office-bound counterparts also experience, you rarely stay in one room for the entirety of your working day. Moving around from office to meeting room, or study to sitting room for different tasks means that multiple sources of task lighting must be considered. Think about the areas that you spend your time and use appropriate lighting to help keep you stimulated throughout the day. Your favourite chair in the sitting room could benefit from a floor mounted reading lamp, whereas studying plans on the dining room table could be assisted by additional task lights.

Lack of natural light may be a consideration as the winter months close in. As light levels start to fade during this time of year, it is common to feel the effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This ailment manifests itself with gloomy moods and lethargy as the amount of natural light diminishes, causing your productivity to dip. Lumie (www.outsidein.com) have come up with a fantastic range of products to counteract this, allowing you to flood your office with sun-style lighting that can boost your mood leaving you as bouncy as a bright summer's day.

We spend 50% of our adult life working and as lighting has the ability to improve not only our mood but also our productivity, then its importance cannot be understated.

To discuss how well considered lighting can benefit you, please contact Light IQ.

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