

# Adding Interior Lighting

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The information in this article applies to:



## QUESTION

I would like to add lighting to my plan's interior. Do you have any suggestions?



## ANSWER

Lighting is an important consideration in the design of any interior space. Well designed lighting is tailored to the activities that take place there, enhances the decor, and helps create a positive experience of the space.

Interior lighting is often described in terms of layers, with each layer performing a specific function. Ambient light provides general illumination for a space and is usually considered the first layer. The next layer is task lighting,

which provides additional, directed lighting for aiding in particular activities like reading or food preparation. After ambient and task lighting, the next layer to consider is accent lighting, which is used to call attention to special objects or architectural elements or which actually act as special features themselves.

Interior lighting can take many forms, including ceiling, wall, and cabinet mounted fixtures, as well as table and floor lamps, and there are a variety of light fixtures available in Home Designer software to help you plan your space.

## Ambient Lighting


Ambient, or general, lighting is light that illuminates the whole room and can be thought of as the indoor equivalent of natural sunlight outdoors. The majority of a room's ambient light usually comes from general purpose ceiling and wall fixtures, but light from other sources like task lighting and windows also contribute to the total ambient light in an interior space.

Typical sources of ambient light include flush mounted ceiling lights, ceiling fan lights, chandeliers, and torchieres. In addition, some wall sconces and recessed wall lights can be used for ambient lighting.


When planning the ambient light in a room, there are a few helpful tips to keep in mind:

- Unless the space is small, use more than one source of ambient light to avoid excessive lighting in some areas and not enough in others.
- Ambient lighting does not necessarily need to be bright. Use multiple sources, strategically placed, to create a warm glow throughout the space.
- Avoid using only ceiling mounted fixtures for ambient light. Consider ways to combine it with wall lighting, indirect lighting, and even uplighting to produce light that shines from multiple directions. Multi-directional ambient light is not only more effective, it is aesthetically pleasing and helps make a room feel spacious.
- Particularly in spaces with multiple uses, it's a good idea to install dimmers to control the level of ambient light so that it can be adjusted for different purposes.

## To add ambient light fixtures to a plan

1. Select **Build> Electrical> Light**  from the menu, then click inside a room area.

**Note:** If you click away from a wall, a ceiling fixture will be created. If you click near a wall, a wall sconce will be created.

2. The style of fixture created with the **Light**  tool depends on which Style Template you used to create the plan when it was new.
  - In the **DEFAULT** template, a recessed ceiling light and cylindrical sconce are created.



- In the **AMERICAN CASUAL** template, a recessed ceiling light and vertical cylindrical sconce are created.



- In the **ARTS & CRAFTS** template, a recessed ceiling light and sconce are created.



- In the COLONIAL template, a recessed ceiling light and traditional double sconce are created.



- In the COUNTRY COTTAGE template, a recessed ceiling light and double shaded sconce are created.



- In the **MEDITERRANEAN INFLUENCE** template, a recessed ceiling light and funnel-shaped sconce are created.



- In the TODAY'S TRADITIONAL template, a recessed ceiling light and torch style sconce are created.

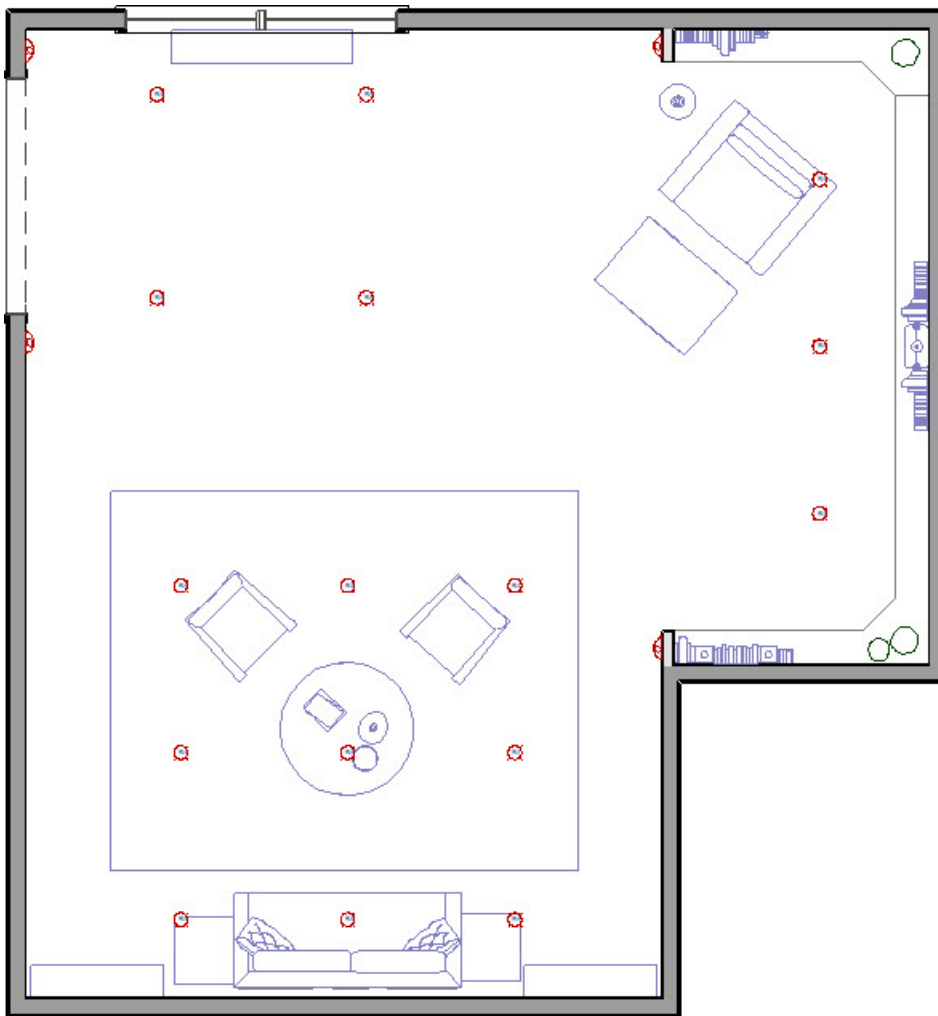




- In the URBAN CHIC/CONTEMPORARY template, a recessed ceiling light and double bar sconce are created.



3. When choosing locations for ambient light, consider positioning them so that areas where people spend a lot of time receive a bit more light, while areas where people spend less time receive a bit less.



- In this example, most of the ambient light is provided by recessed ceiling lights.
- The ceiling lights are closer together in areas where people spend time - by the seating arrangement and the reading chair in the library nook.
- Wall sconces are also used so that all of the ambient light is not directed downward.

Additional light fixtures can be added to your plan from the Library Browser, as described below.

## Task Lighting



Task lighting is used to supplement a room's ambient light, providing extra light in areas where specific tasks are often performed. Task lighting can contribute to the ambient light in a room, but one of its benefits is that it actually allows you to reduce the overall ambient light required in a space and save energy in the process.

Examples of activities that should have task lighting include reading, writing, cooking, sewing, and grooming (including bathing, shaving, applying makeup, and dressing). Good task lighting should make things easy to see without producing glare, and helps avoid eye fatigue and strain.

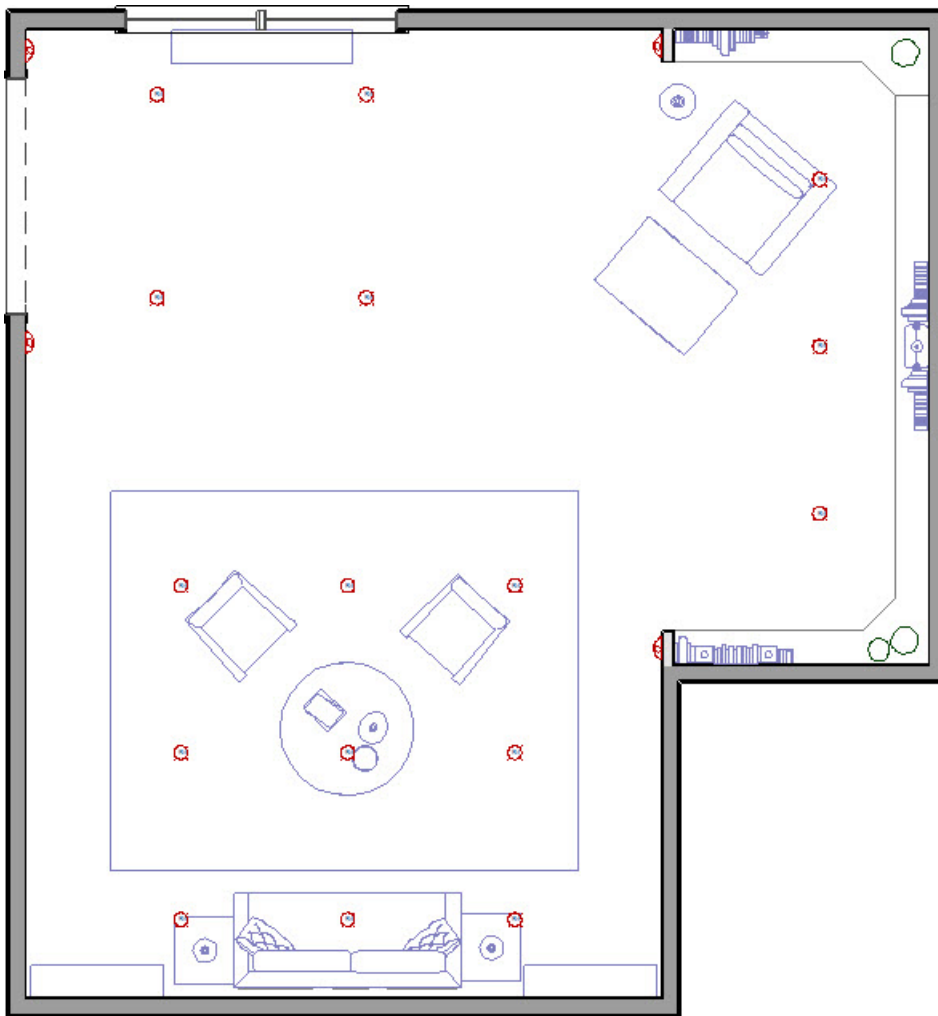
Common sources of task lighting include desk and table lamps, directional ceiling lights, adjustable or swing-arm floor or table lamps, and under counter lights.

When planning the task lighting for a room, it's helpful to start by making of list of the activities you plan to do there, as well as where in the room these activities are typically performed. Then consider the type of light that would be most helpful to each task

## To add task lighting to a plan

1. Select **View> Library Browser**  from the menu to open the Library Browser window.
2. Browse to **Home Designer Core Catalogs> Architectural> Lighting** or use the Search function to find a fixture that suits your needs. Examples of library fixtures that might serve as task lighting can be found in:
  - Lighting> Cabinet (not available in Home Designer Suite)
  - Lighting> Ceiling Mounted> Recessed
  - Lighting> Lamps
  - Lighting> Pendants
  - Lighting> Track Lighting
3. When you find a light fixture that you'd like to use:
  - Click on its name in the tree list or on its image in the Selection Pane to select it.
  - Move your mouse pointer into the drawing area. Your pointer will display the Light  icon as well as a preview outline of the selected fixture.
  - Click to place as many copies of the fixture as you require, then select another tool when you are finished.
  - Bear in mind that Wall Mounted fixtures must always be placed against a wall - they cannot be free standing like floor or ceiling lamps.
4. Task lighting should be used in addition to ambient light in areas where activities that require good vision are typically done.

In this example, table lamps are placed on the end tables on each side of the sofa, and a floor lamp is positioned next to the arm chair.




## Accent Lighting

Unlike ambient and task lighting, accent lighting does not serve a strictly utilitarian purpose. It is, however, an invaluable design tool that can be used to create atmosphere and both highlight and compliment your other decorating choices. Accent lighting is sometimes discussed in terms of its various effects: including focal lighting, decorative lighting, and mood lighting.

- **Focal lighting** is used to draw attention to a special object, such as a piece of art, or to highlight an architectural feature like a plant shelf, wall niche, or mantle. Focal lighting has the additional benefit of drawing the eye away from less attractive aspects of the space. Examples include art/picture lights, up lights, directional wall sconces and ceiling lighting, and lighting inside cabinetry or shelves.
- **Decorative lighting**, on the other hand, is actually a special object in and of itself. Chandeliers, decorative wall sconces and pendant lights, art glass lamps, candles, and even neon art are examples of decorative lighting.
- **Mood lighting** is used to achieve a particular atmosphere, feeling, or type of energy in a room. Often, focal and decorative lighting can also serve as mood lighting. Mood lighting can also be created with the use of dimmers on task or ambient light fixtures. For example, dimmers allow a kitchen to be well lit when food is being prepared, but more softly lit during meals.

When planning the accent lighting in a room, consider any important objects or architectural features that you would like to highlight, and think about how you would like people to feel when they are in the space.

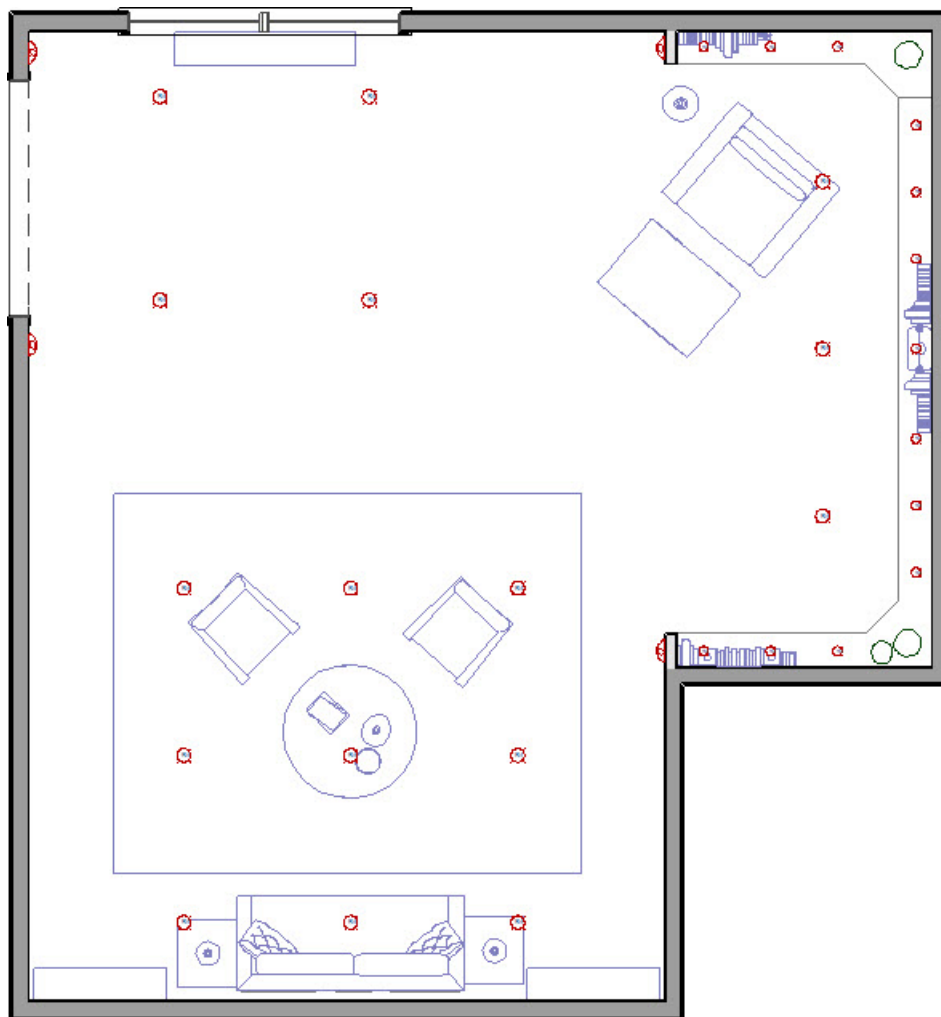
## To add accent lighting to a plan

1. Select **View> Library Browser**  from the menu to open the Library Browser window.
2. Browse to **Home Designer Core Catalog> Architectural> Lighting** or use the Search function to find a fixture that suits your needs.

Examples of library fixtures that might serve as accent lighting can be found in:

- Lighting> Ceiling Mounted> Recessed
- Lighting> Wall Mounted> Semi-Flush Mount
- Lighting> Pendants
- Lighting> Track Lighting

In this example, art lights are placed over the framed wall art and recessed puck lights are added over the bookshelves in the library nook.



## Multiple Purpose Lighting

When planning the lighting for a space or selecting fixtures, bear in mind that often, a light source can provide more than one layer of lighting. For example:

- Task and accent lighting contribute to a space's total ambient light.
- When dimmer switches are used, ambient lights can also act as accent lighting.
- Track and recessed lighting can function as ambient, task or accent lighting, depending on how they are directed.
- Decorative lighting can also serve other lighting purposes: an art glass pendant light, for example, may also provide task and mood lighting.

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#### Related Articles

📖 [Adjusting the Sunlight \(/support/article/KB-00922/adjusting-the-sunlight.html\)](/support/article/KB-00922/adjusting-the-sunlight.html)

📖 [Controlling Light Sources \(/support/article/KB-01007/controlling-light-sources.html\)](/support/article/KB-01007/controlling-light-sources.html)

📖 [Creating a Night Scene with Exterior Lights \(/support/article/KB-00282/creating-a-night-scene-with-exterior-lights.html\)](/support/article/KB-00282/creating-a-night-scene-with-exterior-lights.html)