

Let there be the right kind of light

DEB TAPP

Investing in lighting is as important as investing in the bricks and mortar of a home, says Bryan King.

The lighting consultant and Lighting Council New Zealand executive director says lighting is the prime determinant of mood and ambience in homes at night.

"Yet people don't realise just how vital good lighting is - they might spend an awful lot of money on brilliant wall and floor coverings but creating that mood and ambience will very much depend on how they execute the lighting.

"Bad lighting will be an ambience-destroyer and a profound and ongoing irritation to occupants.

"Conversely, good lighting depends on the astute use of light and shade, and can dramatically enhance the occupants' experience by highlighting noteworthy architectural and interior features."

Bryan describes the "common crime" of bad lighting as "glare", where lighting is poorly laid out and poorly positioned and therefore in your eyes, even though the fittings and bulbs may be of good design and quality.

"An over-abundance of light that lacks finesse can make an otherwise very appealing interior end up feeling like a fish and chip shop!"

Good lighting, on the other hand, is achieved when the combination of aesthetic, practical and technical criteria are met.

"These aspects combined play a big part in delivering a pleasing, comfortable and practical living environment - it's an instrument that needs a bit of a surgeon's scalpel, not a great big sledge hammer."

To achieve great results it's a matter of understanding a few important concepts, including colour temperature, colour rendering and the need for balancing horizontal and vertical lighting.

Colour temperature choice will help to define practical and functional spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and toilets, from relaxation spaces like living areas, bedrooms and media rooms.

Colour temperature goes by degrees Kelvin "K", 2700-3000K being a warmer look light for relaxation spaces and 4000K being a cooler look light for functional and working spaces.

"Colour temperature is a good way to change ambience, it's about the warmth or coolness of the light, it's nothing to do with the product running hot or cold," explains Bryan.

In offices, 4000K is typically used, but in the home he would use it in toilets, laundries and sometimes kitchens because if applied without due care it can make a living environment look harsh and unwelcoming.

"And if you put 2700-3000K into a laundry, it would make interior surfaces look muddy and mushy, the whites of appliances would not look at all crisp and it wouldn't feel like an efficient workspace."

It is vital when choosing LED lighting colour temperature to consider interior surfaces, paint, fabric tones and colours, says Bryan.

"Brown, red and yellow surface tones respond best to warm LED light and blue, grey, green surface tones better to cooler LED light.

"Autumn colours, for example, will be enhanced by a warmer colour temperature, while cooler, harder surfaces will be enhanced by cooler colour temperatures."

Bryan recommends the addition of dimmers to relaxation spaces for



Investing in well planned lighting is as important as the bricks and mortar of a home but is sometimes left as an after-thought.



Bryan King, lighting consultant and Lighting Council New Zealand executive director.

adjustable and mood creating lighting.

With some new LED options there is even a "dim to warm" function, where lighting progressively changes to much warmer colour temperatures when dimmed to lower levels.

"Cooler colour light has a perk up factor about it, it's a stimulant, while a warm LED light generally slows us down and makes us mellow."

"But it's not about right or wrong, it's about what you want to achieve, making sure you've got the right light for the space and function of each room and enhancing the colour palette you have chosen for your interior walls

and floors."

The colour rendering index (CRI) is just as important when it comes to good lighting, says Bryan.

CRI is the measure of how accurately the light source depicts natural colours and a figure of 100 is the ideal, he explains.

"High CRI light will make room colours look more vibrant and lifelike, the colours have a vibrancy about them, whereas they can get washed out with low-grade LEDs.

"Red, for example, is a critical colour that can look drab and washed out when low-spec LED light sources are used."

Though they cost a little more to buy, High CRI (90+) LED lights have become increasingly popular, says Bryan, simply because they bring visual "zing and pop" to an interior.

Lastly, consider the astute application of recessed ceiling lights versus wall lighting, which translates into the balance of light on horizontal and vertical surfaces.

"Fixed ceiling recessed lights, or downlights, have become hugely popular, they are a workhorse in residential lighting but they need to be used with care and shouldn't be overused, even though they almost always are," says Bryan.

"If clumsily applied, they can create a clinical feel in an interior space, a bland blanket of light, as the space may be starved of vertical

wall lighting."

To combat that, consider the addition of décor wall lighting or use tilt-able recessed lights for wall-washing of vertical surfaces, he suggests.

"Downlights are best at lighting of horizontal surfaces, which is great for the dining table, or to read a newspaper, but you don't want the same levels of light everywhere.

"Using wall lights, or adjustable recessed lights that bring out architectural detail or artwork on a wall can really bring a room to life.

"You don't want to pump a high quantity of light across the board, you want to let the light taper-off in the corners of the room, it's about using pools of light to create light where you need it [and not putting light where it's not needed] to enhance that visual experience."

In experiencing the ambience of a room, the eye first responds and reacts to the light on vertical surfaces, so Bryan suggests a mix of adjustable recessed lights, along with mood enhancing lighting such as pendants, wall lights, table lamps, and even freestanding lights.

"Good lighting means different things to different people, and much depends on their personal physiological needs - a 70-year-old with impaired eyesight might need

lots of light whereas a 30-year-old's needs will definitely differ, it's not a one-size-fits-all situation.

"Think critically about what effect you want to create in your home, remember more is not

necessarily better, and in some cases lower levels of light applied in a more variegated and sophisticated manner can yield more pleasant visual results.

"It's about putting together the

balance of colour criteria [CRI and colour temperature], the accentuating of textures and the right mix of horizontal and vertical lighting that will give you that standout ambience and mood."



Tilt-able recessed lights are ideal for wall-washing of vertical surfaces.

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New Elite controller from Microsoft

CHRISTMAS WILL come early for Xbox households when Microsoft launches the Elite Wireless Controller Series 2 on November 4.

The first Elite controller update in four years will provide gamers with more than 30 new ways to play.

Microsoft says it will be the most customisable controller yet and was developed with members of the gaming community.

"In the last four years, the response from fans around the innovative features in the Elite controller has been incredibly positive, and we have learned a lot about how our most passionate gamers play."

It dubs Elite Series 2 "the world's most advanced controller" and says it will be compatible with Xbox One consoles, Windows PCs, and other Xbox-supported platforms.

One of the biggest improvements is adjustable-tension thumbsticks with three resistance settings, including options to match the same thumbstick resistance as Xbox 360 or standard Xbox One controllers.

There will also be an additional, shorter hair trigger lock setting where the trigger pull distance is shorter than ever, for faster firing.

And because the controller now automatically recognises adjustments to the hair trigger locks, changes don't

have to be made in the Xbox Accessories app. Additionally, new wrap-around rubberised grips extend to the top of the controller for more control and comfort.

The Elite Series 2 comes with new interchangeable thumbsticks and paddle shapes, to better tailor the controller to gaming preferences.



Up to three custom profiles can be saved on the controller - gamers can instantly switch between these and a default profile with the dedicated Profile button (new LED lights on the top of the controller show which profile is selected).

Microsoft says the updated Xbox Accessories app provides the Elite Series

2 with "limitless customisation" for remapping buttons, triggers, bumpers, and paddles.

This includes new features like remapping voice commands - "record that," "take a screenshot" - to buttons.

The Elite Series 2 also offers more connectivity, including Xbox Wireless, Bluetooth, and USB-C, and extended game play and durability with a built-in rechargeable battery that lasts up to 40 hours a charge.

"Our long-life battery is designed to operate at its full capacity for years of use," Microsoft claims.

The controller comes with a USB-C cable and charging dock, re-engineered components (including the bumpers, thumbsticks, and grip material for improved resilience), and new firmware to automatically calibrate thumbsticks for improved dead zone control.

The Elite Wireless Controller Series 2 can be pre-ordered for \$279.95 at EB Games, JB Hi Fi, The Warehouse, Mighty Ape and Microsoft Store.

What will be in the box: a carrying case, six thumbsticks (two standard, two classic, one tall, one wide dome), four paddles (two medium, two mini), two D-pads (standard and faceted), thumbstick-adjustment tool, charging dock for in-case or out-of-case charging, and braided USB-C cable.