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Bathroom Lights That Let You Shine

Good lighting helps more than a bathroom's looks — it can help yours as well.

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Lighting is crucial to how well your bathroom functions — not just how good it looks. Lighting experts urge homeowners to think through their lighting plan from the project's start.

"Lighting is more important in the bathroom than any other room in the house," says Randall Whitehead, a nationally known lighting designer who has authored seven books on lighting. "This is the place where we all do very detailed and important work such as shaving or applying makeup. It is also the first place we see ourselves in the morning and the last place we see ourselves at night. Wouldn't you want the sight of yourself to be a positive one?"

CONSULT A LIGHTING DESIGNER

Consider adding a lighting designer to your bathroom remodeling team. (Visit the International Association of Lighting Designers' website at <http://www.iald.org> to find a professional.) A lighting designer will look at the bath's overall design to determine the amount and placement of light needed in the space. If budget doesn't allow for a lighting designer, Whitehead's latest book "Residential Lighting, A Practical Guide" includes an extensive section on baths.

LAYER THE LIGHT

People tend to repeat what they grew up with, usually a single light mounted above the mirror. "Anyone who has been in a bathroom with just one fixture in the ceiling or just a light over the mirror knows how unflattering a single source of light can be," Whitehead says.

For good lighting, a bathroom remodel needs the following four types of light:

- *Task lighting* provides adequate light for daily chores, such as applying makeup and shaving. The best task light at the mirror is a pair of fixtures mounted on the wall, flanking the sink. This is called cross illumination and provides shadow-free lighting for the face. Once task lighting has been addressed, look at other types of lighting that will pull the whole room together.
- *Ambient lighting* is achieved by bouncing the light off the ceiling, which softens shadows and can easily take ten years off a person's appearance. Like Whitehead says, that's better than Botox.
- *Accent lighting* gives depth and dimension to a bathroom. Accent lighting allows you to illuminate design features, including art, plants or even beautiful tile.
- *Decorative lighting*, created by hanging eye-catching fixtures from the ceiling, will dress up the bath and add a layer of luxury. Whitehead likes to call decorative lighting "architectural jewelry."

CREATE A SCENE

Whitehead recommends zoned lighting and dimmers to create illumination that adjusts for a variety of situations, or "scenes." Creating different lighting scenes gives you bright light in the area where you get ready in the morning, creates soft lighting for a relaxing soak in the tub, or safely illuminates middle-of-the-night trips to the bathroom.

OVERCOME DESIGN CHALLENGES

Often bathrooms are located on interior walls, which can mean a lack of natural light. "I like natural light and try to incorporate it whenever possible," Whitehead says. "For me, a room without a source of natural light feels a bit subterranean. I often recommend the addition of windows or skylights as part of a remodel."

Whitehead frequently uses a product called Solatube, a small-diameter skylight that is flexible and easy to install. When all else fails, Whitehead sometimes creates a faux skylight, using a color-corrected "daylight" fluorescent or LED (light emitting diode) source, to give the feel of natural light. If sunlight — real or created — shines on your remodeled bathroom, it will look good, and you will too.

To find out more, see the HGTV Beginner's Guide to Remodeling Your Own Bathroom, [Getting Started: 10 Steps to a New Bathroom](#).

Resources

Randall Whitehead
Lighting Designer
Randall Whitehead Lighting Solutions
San Francisco, Calif.
www.randallwhitehead.com



Creating layers of light in your bathroom will make it glow.