

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO UNDER CABINET LIGHTING

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The Essentials Of Great Lighting

Today, the kitchen has to be multifunctional. It's not only a place to prepare and eat food, but also a place to relax, a place to entertain, and a place to enjoy. It should be inviting, bright, functional, and easy to control. The right kitchen lighting will help you stay clean, organized, and safe, while letting you create the perfect atmosphere for an early morning baking frenzy, board games with the kids on a rainy afternoon, or spending a couple's night in.

Most of all, light layering (having multiple light sources for different purposes) is the most important, all-encompassing rule in kitchen lighting design. A single light source never does any space justice. You need different sources of light for different purposes. Ambient lighting, task lighting, accent lighting, safety lighting, and mood lighting are all essential parts of great kitchen design.

This book will first and foremost address task lighting in the kitchen.

Under cabinet lights are the most popular, attractive, and handy kind of task lighting for the kitchen. Lighting designers agree that the path to any beautiful, functional kitchen starts with excellent task lights. Kitchen task lights have one simple purpose – to help you out. When you really need to get down to business, to cook a gourmet dinner or finally scrub down those countertops, task lights allow you to see.

A Quick Overview of this Book

In this book, you'll learn how to get that perfect lighting in your own kitchen. You'll discover what kind of under cabinet lights will work best for your space, the ins and outs of every light source and fixture style, and even what kind of lights will work best with your personality. Then, move on to step-by-step instructions on how to layout, install, and operate your under cabinet lights.

Already have under cabinet lights in your kitchen? Just flip over to the maintenance section to learn what to expect from your lights over time, and how to fix common problems that may come up.

You may also want to note that under cabinet lights work in areas other than the kitchen – offices, labs, workstations, even in outdoor cooking areas. For more on this, visit the "Beyond the Cabinet" section.

The Basics of Under Cabinet Lighting

Q: What are under cabinet lights?

A: Under cabinet lighting is an essential addition to any kitchen, office space, or shelving unit. Their light shines down onto countertops or workspaces to provide task lighting and to complement general lighting throughout a space. Under cabinet lights normally fall into two different categories – linear or puck lights. Linear lights are long, and stretch the entire length of your cabinets. Puck lights are round, singular fixtures that provide concentrated pops of light under your cabinets.

Q: Are under cabinet lights known by any other name?

A: Just in case you're wondering, under cabinet lights are known by a whole bundle of different names. Besides the name "under cabinet lighting," which makes a lot of sense because they're the lights you install under your cabinets, they're also called undermount lights, under counter lights, under cupboard lights, and of course task lights. So if you're looking to install any of those in your kitchen, this book will work for you.

Q: Where can you use them? (Why do you need them?)

A: Typically, you'll find under cabinet lights in the kitchen. Whether you're mixing, shredding, slicing, or dicing, having task lights in the kitchen creates a space where cooking is easier and more enjoyable. With a properly lit kitchen countertop you should even be able to distinguish the sugar from the salt, just by looking. Under cabinet kitchen lighting can also be a nice accent to your decorating scheme, drawing attention to your backsplash and your countertops, and making your kitchen look larger.

The bright, focused illumination from an under cabinet light's slim profile is also ideal for offices, work stations in hospitals or doctors' offices, bookcases, shelving, and more. Essentially, under cabinet lighting excels as an application in any area where you need task lighting and want the look to be contemporary and subtle.

Choosing Under Cabinet Lights

When picking out your lights, there are tons of options to choose from. How do you know what style of under cabinet lighting is right for your kitchen? This section will help you find your ideal under cabinet lights based on light source, fixture style, color, cost, energy-savings, special features, special needs, and how you use your kitchen.

Light Source

A great place to start when deciding which under cabinet lights are right for you is to first select the light source. The way each one produces light affects most other aspects as well - the fixture style, the color of light, the efficiency, and the rated life all hinge on this one thing. Here's what each light source is like:

Fluorescent

A regular fluorescent light bulb consists of a glass tube coated on the inside with a phosphorous substance. Inside the tube are mercury vapor and two tungsten coils at opposite ends.

To produce light, the tungsten heats up and passes electrons back and forth. The electrons collide with the mercury atoms, sending out UV light. Finally, the UV light, which isn't visible to the naked eye, passes through the lamp's phosphor coating, sending out the white light we see.

It's important to note that fluorescent lights have come a long way since the hideous greenish ceiling fixtures found in outdated schools and offices. New ones emit bright white light, and with instant start technology, they can turn on without flickering or buzzing. A fluorescent lamp emits light evenly over its entire surface, so you can have a uniform distribution of light across the length of your countertops.

If you like bright reliable light to help you spot even the smallest details on your countertops while making your backsplashes catch the eye, these lights are a great choice.

LED

Unlike other light bulbs, LEDs are an electronic light source. They produce light just by the movement of electrons in a semiconductor material. Electrons release energy in the form of photons, or light.

In essence, LEDs (light emitting diodes) are tiny light bulbs attached to electrical circuits. Collected together in clusters, they can produce enough light to be useful. Each LED light fixture contains many diodes. Manufacturers can arrange these diodes in almost any configuration, to be as streamlined or as decorative as you want.

Just like fluorescent lights, the LED is a newer light source that has come a long way since its start. LEDs seem to be quickly overtaking fluorescent lights as a very popular kind of under cabinet light. This is because they are more efficient, last longer, produce a higher range of color temperatures, and their sleek design lets them fit inside creatively designed fixtures.

If you have a custom lighting project in mind, or just like saving energy with your lighting, LEDs are a great choice.

Xenon

A xenon lamp is a kind of incandescent light bulb. The lamp has a thin tungsten filament within its glass envelope, and when electricity flows through it, it heats up until the filament glows white hot and produces light. Xenon light bulbs get their name from the xenon gas added within the lamp.

Why add gas? Regular incandescent light bulbs have vacuums within their envelopes because air oxidizes the glowing tungsten. An inert gas like xenon slows down this process, prolonging the life of the light bulb. The large gas molecules deflect the tungsten molecules, slowing their rate of evaporation and making the filament last longer.

Xenon is one of the noble gases on the Periodic Table, and it's odorless and colorless. It helps retard the filament's evaporation, and it also produces a bright-white light when stimulated by electricity. This makes xenon light bulbs more efficient, and allows them to run cooler than other incandescent and halogen lamps.

Xenon lights are another very popular choice for under cabinet lights, even though they aren't as efficient as fluorescent or LED lights. Xenon lights render colors perfectly, always maintaining the aesthetic integrity of your kitchen to a tee. They are also dimmable, so you can set different light levels in your kitchen. One very popular use would be keeping the lights dim at night as a kind of night light for when entering the kitchen later at night for a snack.

If you like working with incandescent lights, you'll be able to adapt to xenon lights with little effort.

Incandescent & Halogen

A quick note about these two light sources: Though you may be able to find incandescent and halogen under cabinet lights, we don't recommend using them. Both of these light sources tend to run very hot, which can cause a couple of problems. The excess heat can spoil perishables stored in cabinets or on counter space. It can also make your entire cooking space uncomfortably warm and run up your A/C usage.

Fixture Style

The next important choice you need to make when picking out your under cabinet lights is what kind of fixture to use. There are big distinctions here: linear or puck, recessed or surface mount, and plug-in, hardwired, or battery powered. Each kind of light works well for under cabinet lighting; the one you choose is really just a matter of preference.

Linear

Linear under cabinet lights are usually rectangular in shape. Some can be long and skinny while others may be a little wider. Bottom line, they come in a variety of lengths, widths, and heights, but they're all "linear" in shape. Some might also call them strip lighting. Since you can link many together off one power source, it's possible to connect multiple linear under cabinet lights under the entire length of your cabinet cavities to provide a uniform, well-distributed light for your whole countertop.

Some of the most popular kinds of linear task lights are thin, linkable lights that come in fluorescent, LED, and xenon or thin, linkable microfluorescent fixtures.

If you need something thinner than an inch, you should try light bars, light strips, or tape lights. Light bars (usually LED) can be as thin as 1/3", but when they're hidden under your cabinets, you won't be able to tell the difference between the light from these, and the light from more traditional linear fixtures. If you'd rather use xenon lights, but still want something low-profile, a xenon light strip might be just the thing. The thin, flexible strip allows for many creative installations. A very, very thin linear light source on the market is the LED tape light. They're less than 1/10" thick, and the strong adhesive backing on every reel will stick to almost any surface with ease.

Puck

Puck lights are singular, usually circular lights, only a few inches in circumference. Usually these lights are very simple, but you can find more decorative ones shaped like triangles or gemstones. Popular puck lights can come in xenon, LED, and fluorescent.

The biggest appeal of puck lighting is their versatility. A puck light can create a pool of light for a focal point, add another layer of light to a room, or work as a functional task light. Under cabinet puck lights for the kitchen give you the option to place pops of light where you need them most, or create an even layer of light installing multiple puck lights in a row.

Surface Mount Or Recessed?

You can use fixtures that mount directly on the surface under your cabinets for easy installation, or ones that are recessed into the bottom of the cabinets for an absolutely seamless look.

Most linear task lights are meant to be mounted on the surface underneath your cabinets, so you don't have to make large cuts into the built-in structure. A lot of people assume that non-recessed lights will have fixtures jutting out unattractively from underneath the cabinets. This really isn't the case – most of the surface-mount options are so thin that you'd have to literally stick your head underneath the cabinet and look up to see the actual fixture. If you can, for some reason, see the lights after installation, all you need to do is add a small vanity panel (bottom trim) to the bottom of the wall cabinet to completely conceal them.

If you absolutely love the clean look of a flat cabinet bottom, you can always choose to install recessed under cabinet lighting in your kitchen. Just keep in mind that usually all of the recessed options are also puck lights. It's much easier to recess the small, circular puck lights than larger linear fixtures.

Hardwired, Plug-in, or Battery?

How do you want to power your under cabinet lights? Whether you hardwire them, plug them in, or power them with batteries really depends on how much freedom you have in your space, and how much effort you want to put into installation.

Battery operated under cabinet lights are by far the easiest to install because they don't require any wiring, and usually they use adhesive to attach to a surface. You can put them anywhere you like, without having to worry about being near a power source. These are great to use in rental kitchens or when you're just not ready to commit to a more extensive lighting project. Most, if not all, battery operated lights you'll find are LED puck lights, so they'll last you a very long time.

There are a few disadvantages to these lights, however. Besides having a limited selection of fixtures to use, the light emitted from these fixtures usually isn't as high quality as many plug-in or hardwired lights. Also, you can't wire them all to one light switch or dimmer for convenient lighting control.

Plug-in under cabinet lights are also fairly easy install, but give you a little more freedom when choosing your fixtures and controlling them after installation. Simply attach the fixtures to the underside of your cabinets and plug them into a nearby outlet. Most plug-in lights, whether linear or puck, can link to each other so you don't have to plug in each individual fixture. You can operate all your under cabinet lights from one outlet and one on/off switch. The light quality of plug-in units will be higher than battery operated lights. They're another great choice for any kitchen, because the installation is minimal and can be done in an afternoon. The only disadvantage to plug-in lights is that you'll have

to deal with at least one exposed cord running to an outlet. The plug-in look isn't quite as seamless as a hardwired fixture.

Hardwired under cabinet lights are the most convenient, professional, attractive choice because the light quality is excellent, the fixture options are diverse, there's no exposed wiring, and you can control them with a dedicated wall switch or dimmer. However, these lights are also the most difficult to install. You need to tap into a nearby power source, or pull a new circuit to the desired area to power the lights properly. Either way, electrical work is involved, so you may need to consider hiring a professional to install your direct-wired lights if you don't feel comfortable doing it yourself.

Voltage

You also need to decide on your under cabinet lights' voltage. Line voltage operates directly off your home's voltage supply, which in the U.S. is about 120 volts. Low voltage under cabinet lights (if you hadn't guessed) operates from a much lower voltage supply – 12 or 24 volts. While each fixture is an excellent choice for your kitchen, choosing one simply depends on your personal preference.

Line Voltage

These lights are high quality, easy to install, and generally cheaper upfront. Since they work off the standard voltage supply in your home, you don't need to wire your lights to a transformer in order to operate them correctly. You can simply connect them to power. Additionally, you can use them with standard line voltage dimmers instead of the ones made specifically for low voltage lights.

Low Voltage

When installing low voltage under cabinet lights, you will have to take some special measures. You'll need a transformer to convert your home's voltage supply to a much lower number, and if you plan to use any accessories, like dimmers, they'll need to be compatible with your lighting system. However, low voltage lights are just as high quality as line voltage lights, and they generally last longer and even use slightly less energy. Plus, low voltage light bulbs tend to be much smaller - so you often have more diverse fixture options to choose from.

Efficiency

The more efficient a lamp is, the less energy it uses. An efficient light will use a small amount of energy to produce a large amount of light. Efficiency (also known as efficacy) is important to consider when choosing under cabinet lights, because you don't want lights that will unnecessarily inflate your energy bill. Good, efficient lights will save you money, and eventually pay for themselves with the energy they conserve.

Efficiency is measured in lumens per watt. Lumens measure a lamp's brightness, and watts count units of electrical power. You can use this measurement to determine any light source's efficiency.

An incandescent light bulb produces about 11-17 lumens per watt. Now let's have a look at how LED, fluorescent, and xenon under cabinet lights measure up.

LED

LEDs are one of the most efficient under cabinet lights you can find. They produce more lumens per watt than almost any other light source. Generally, that number is around 60-100+ lm/w.

Fluorescent

Fluorescent under cabinet lights are also very efficient. A linear fluorescent light can produce anywhere from 50-100 lm/w. A compact fluorescent lamp can produce about 35-50 lm/w.

Xenon

When you're dealing with xenon lights, the rate of lumens per watt can vary depending on the size and shape of the lamp. For this reason, it's very difficult to come up with an accurate average for the light source as a whole. Just know they're more efficient than incandescent light bulbs because of the xenon gas in their glass envelopes, but less efficient than fluorescent lights.

Rated Life

When you choose an under cabinet light with a long rated life, you'll save time and money keeping up with constant replacements.

The rated life of a lamp indicates the time when 50% of a large quantity of lamps will burn out. That means that 50% of these lamps will burn out before the rated life and 50% will burn out after the rated life. The rated life doesn't mean that each of the lamps will last that long. It's just a best estimate.

The average incandescent light bulb lasts about 1,000 hours. If you operate it 3 hours per day, the light bulb will most likely last less than a year. Let's see how that compares to the average rated lives of LED, fluorescent, and xenon lights.

LED

Quality LED lights usually last longer than other kinds of lights.

LEDs don't burn out like incandescent light bulbs. Instead they get progressively dimmer over their lifetimes until they no longer emit enough light to be useful. An LED is considered to be no longer useful – to have reached its rated life – when it emits only 70% of its original light.

While some LEDs may have a rated life of 100,000 hours, this is usually only under perfect laboratory conditions. This number decreases under real-world conditions, when the LED is affected by the rated life of its driver, or by exposure to excess heat. An excellent rated life for an LED under cabinet light is around 50,000 hours. Operated for 3 hours per day, that light could last over 45 years.

Fluorescent

Fluorescent lights usually last longer than xenon lights, but not as long as LEDs.

Depending on the size of the light bulb a fluorescent under cabinet light uses, it will last between 6,000 and 20,000 hours. Operated for 3 hours a day, that's anywhere from 5 to about 18 years. Generally, microfluorescent fixtures last longer than regular fluorescent under cabinet lights. This rating is based mostly on the light bulb, not the fixture. Once the light bulb burns out, you can replace it and keep using the same fixture.

When using fluorescent lights, you should also note that certain environmental factors could reduce the rated life. If you turn the lights on and off frequently, or use them with an incompatible dimmer switch, they won't last as long. Extreme cold and jarring vibrations can also cause fluorescent lights to burn out sooner, but you usually don't encounter these issues with under cabinet lighting.

Xenon

Xenon lights have the shortest rated lives of the three sources.

The average xenon under cabinet light lasts from 6,000 to 10,000 hours. If you use them for 3 hours every day, they'll usually last between 5 and 9 years. Although xenon lights are a kind of incandescent lights, they last so much longer because they have xenon gas in their glass envelopes. The large gas molecules help prevent the degradation of the lamp's filament, blocking the discarded tungsten molecules, keeping the filament stronger for a longer amount of time.

If you want to extend the life of your xenon light bulbs to rival fluorescents, and even LEDs, use them with a dimmer switch. When you keep a xenon light bulb dimmed by 10%, the light bulb will last twice as long. Dim it by 25% and enjoy the light bulb for 4 times as long. Dim it by 50% and the light bulb will last 20 times as long.

Color Temperature

Color temperature measures the color appearance of a light source. This varies between warm/reddish and cool/bluish. Light sources below 3,200K are considered warm, and light sources above 4,000K as cool.

Color temperature has nothing to do with the amount of heat a lamp emits, but rather the heat of its hue in degrees K (Kelvin). The Kelvin Scale is a temperature scale that references absolute zero (0 degrees Kelvin), which in theory, is the absence of all thermal energy.

These tables may help you better understand the concept and range of color temperature:

How Color Temperature Influences Environment

| APPROX. COLOR TEMPERATURE | ASSOCIATED EFFECTS & MOODS | APPROPRIATE APPLICATIONS |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 2700K | Friendly, Personal, Intimate | Homes, Libraries, Restaurants |
| 3500K | Friendly, Inviting, Non-threatening | New Offices, Public Reception Areas |
| 4100K | Neat, Clean, Efficient | Older Offices, Classrooms, Mass Merchandisers |
| 5000K | Bright, Alert, Exacting Coloration | Graphics, Jewelry Stores, Medical Exam Areas, Photography |

The Color Temperatures Of Common Light Sources

| APPROX. COLOR TEMPERATURE | LIGHT SOURCE |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1600K | Sunrise or Sunset |
| 1800K | Candlelight |
| 1800K | Gaslight |
| 2800K | Household Incandescent Lamp |
| 3000K | Warm White Fluorescent Lamp |
| 3500K | Neutral White Fluorescent Lamp |
| 4100K | Cool White Fluorescent Lamp |
| 5000K | Professional Light Booth |
| 5200K | Bright Midday Sun |
| 6500K | Heavily Overcast Sky |

When choosing under cabinet lights, it's important to pay attention to color temperature because lighting of the wrong hue can seriously distort the look of your entire room. You want light of a color that will compliment your paint colors and make your food look tasty.

If your kitchen contains warm colors – reds, oranges, pinks – you should choose a warm light source so they'll look rich and luxuriant.

For a cooler toned kitchen, you should consider a cooler light source to intensify blues, greens, and whites. They'll appear clean, crisp, and bright.

You can also choose color temperature based on your sense of style or taste in decor. In a more traditional or romantic kitchen, always go for warmer light. In a modern or industrial kitchen, you can't go wrong with cooler lights.

Now that you know your ideal color temperature, here's how to get it in your kitchen. Read on to learn which light sources are available in which color temperatures:

LED

You can find LED under cabinet lights in almost any hue you can imagine. The latest technology enables them to mimic the familiar warm incandescent light, crisp neutral white light, and bright cool white light. They're even available in colored and color-changing varieties if you prefer something more exotic for your kitchen.

NOTE: In their simplest forms, LEDs can be red, green, blue, or amber. The color of an LED depends on the materials used to make it. A red LED, for example, is made with aluminum, gallium, and arsenic. To create a warm white LED, manufacturers will often cover a blue LED with a yellow phosphorous coating. The final product will shine a lovely warm white, but it won't be as bright as an LED without a covering.

Fluorescent

Fluorescent lights can have a bad reputation. That greenish white light you might remember from old school buildings, offices, or hospitals will never make your kitchen look inviting, or your food look appetizing. But, those lights are a thing of the past. Current technology allows the fluorescent light's color temperature range to be much more attractive. Most fluorescent under cabinet lights fall in the range of cool white to neutral white.

Xenon

Xenon lamps look and act very much like incandescents. But because of the xenon gas within their glass envelopes, the light they produce is slightly cooler than the average incandescent, but warmer than a halogen lamp. They usually run between warm and neutral white light.

Color Rendering Index

A light fixture's color rendering index, or CRI shouldn't be confused with its color temperature. CRI is not the measure of a light's color, but rather the measure of its ability to render colors accurately. The scale ranges from 1 (low pressure sodium lamps) to 100 (the sun). An under cabinet light with a CRI of 85 or above is considered to be very good.

CRI is an important measurement to consider when picking out under cabinet lights, because it will affect the entire look of your kitchen. If you go through the trouble of picking out a particular shade of blue to paint your kitchen with, you don't want your lights to distort the color.

Xenon under cabinet lights have a perfect CRI of 100. Quality LED and fluorescent under cabinet lights can have a very good CRI range around 80-90.

Finish

While the finish, or color, of your under cabinet lights isn't as important because they're hidden from view, most fixtures come in several finish options. The most common finishes are white, black, and metallic variants like nickel, bronze, gold, chrome, and copper. When choosing the finish of your fixtures, you should either pick the one that most closely matches your cabinets, or match them with the finish of the rest of your kitchen appliances.

Cost

Which under cabinet lights will get you the best deal? The answer to that question is a little complicated.

For instance, efficient LED under cabinet lights might cost a little more upfront, but they'll pay for themselves in energy savings and outlast most other lights, making them a better buy.

Many fluorescent and xenon under cabinet lights are already affordable, but they won't last as long as LEDs, and they won't save as much energy. You might choose to invest in these lights if you're not using very many, and the energy savings will be marginal, or if you plan to use them with a lighting control like a dimmer, decreasing your energy use and extending the life of your lights.

When investing in under cabinet lights, ask the following questions to determine your fixture's true cost:

- What's the initial number on the price tag?
- How much energy will this light use?
- How long will this light last?

How much maintenance do these lights require?
How many lights do I need?
What accessories will I need to use with my lights?
How do I plan to use my lights?

Special Features

Sometimes, you want under cabinet lights that can do a little more. Here are some special features you can choose for your under cabinet lights.

Motion Sensing Under Cabinet Lights

Having your under cabinet task lighting on a motion sensor can be incredibly helpful when your hands are dirty, because you won't have to stop your work to fiddle with them. Since you use task lights while moving around, performing tasks, you won't have to worry about them turning off while you work. Installing a motion detecting light in a hard to reach spot can be a big help.

If motion detecting under cabinet lights are what you want, your simplest option is to install battery operated LED lights with motion sensors built in. Your other option is to use a motion or occupancy sensor to control your under cabinet lights, instead of a standard light switch. Just make sure to put the switch in a location that will easily detect when you're moving around, but that isn't in close proximity to a heat source, where hot or cold drafts will blow directly on the sensor, or where unintended motion will be within the sensor's field of detection. These stimuli could cause the sensor to malfunction.

Dimmable Under Cabinet Lights

Dimmable under cabinet lights let you create different levels of light, changing the mood of your kitchen anytime you want. Unaccustomed to dimmable lights in the kitchen? It's actually a really great place to have them.

The kitchen is the center of family life. With lighting controls, it can be as versatile as any other room in your home. Here, a dimmer lets you brighten lights at breakfast or for preparing meals, and lower them to catch up with your family over an evening snack, all while saving energy.

All xenon under cabinet lights are dimmable, just like standard incandescent lights. You just need to hook them up to a compatible dimmer switch (low voltage or line voltage) and you're ready to go. Dimmable LED under cabinet lights are also fairly easy to find, but they require special LED compatible dimmers. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to find dimmable fluorescent under cabinet lights.

Under Cabinet Lights For Special Circumstances

If you need your lighting to go beyond the norm, under cabinet lights can help.

Temporary Lights For Rental Kitchens

When you moved into your current place, your kitchen probably had a single ceiling light fixture – a linear fluorescent, a track light – on a basic on/off light switch. The brightness of that single ceiling light is too jarring in the morning, and when you're chopping, dicing, and frying in the evening, it's not enough.

The best thing you can do in here is add one or two light layers for extra task light. Start with under cabinet lights, because they'll make it easier for you to see while cooking, and add a nice ambiance to the room. You can opt to leave the ceiling lights off when you want a lower light level, or use them with your ceiling lights when you've got your chef's hat on.

You are probably not permitted to hardwire or mount anything with screws, so your options are slightly more limited, but you've still got a variety of plug-in or battery-powered, adhesive-backed fixtures. Here are a few ideas:

LED Tape Lights offer bright, even illumination over your entire counter space. They're extremely low-profile, dimmable, energy-saving and come in a variety of colors and color temperatures.

Xenon Light Strips provide warm and crisp task light for your kitchen. The durable xenon light bulbs are each backed with adhesive, so they'll easily fit under your cabinets, and come loose when you're ready to move.

LED Battery Operated Puck Lights are an affordable choice for a little extra task lighting. Just pop them anywhere you need more light, and they'll last and last.

NOTE: When choosing a secondary light source for your kitchen, make sure the fixture's color temperature is similar to the light that you already have. Conflicting color temperatures won't make a bad lighting situation any better.

Under Cabinet Lights For The Aging

Lighting is vital for our health and well-being, and it becomes particularly important the older we get. As you age, two things happen to your eyes. The ability of your pupils to dilate decreases, which effectively makes them smaller, and your lenses become thicker. This means your retinas receive less light, and more of the light that gets through your pupils is absorbed or refracted before it gets to your retina, making an image softer.

When working in the kitchen, older eyes need more light, especially when distinguishing fine detail and contrast. Glare can also be an issue, hindering older people from doing necessary tasks. Dealing with these new challenges can become a bother or even a safety hazard, but a few simple task lighting solutions can help.

To Help Distinguish Fine Details:

Improve the uniform distribution of light in the space with even light layers, including under cabinet lights with a similar color temperature and lumen output as the rest of your lights.

Avoid the "drama" of bright and dark areas in the space, including the inevitable shadows under your cabinets. Linear under cabinet lights with even light distribution are probably your best option here.

To Help Distinguish Contrasts:

Use light sources with high color rendering capabilities like xenon or LED under cabinet lights. This will help while cooking with fine ingredients and cleaning up.

To Help Minimize Glare:

All your under cabinet task lighting fixtures should be well shielded; avoid using bare or exposed lamps.

For an easy transition from bright to dark spaces, make sure you have the ability to dim your lights when necessary.

Lights For Your Personality

As you know by now, so many varieties of under cabinet lights make it really overwhelming to choose the right ones. The good news is, whatever your personal taste, there's an under cabinet light out there for you!

It all depends on how you use your kitchen...

If you keep things very clean...

When you want crisp lines and sparkling countertops, fluorescent under cabinet lights will fit your sleek, modern eye. Don't worry – these aren't the outdated humming, green fluorescents that you might think of. New fluorescent lights emit crisp, bright light that compliment even the whitest cabinets and counters, while making sure you spot every last crumb.

You might be interested in:

- Microfluorescent Fixtures
- Thin Linear Fluorescent Under Cabinet Lights
- Fluorescent Puck Lights

If you're a perfectionist...

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