

LOG HOME LIVING

Lighten Up | Lighting Tips for Log Homes

Illuminating suggestions to keep your log home light and bright.



Your eyes aren't deceiving you: the rooms in your house really are dimmer than you'd expect, thanks, in part, to the log walls. "With darker wall colors like brown, you're losing 50 percent of your light; it's being absorbed by the walls," says Katie Sapp, an American Lighting Association certified lighting consultant at Peak to Creek Electrical in Telluride, Colorado.

To counteract the darkness, add a variety of fixtures to your home, recommends Rob Colgan, executive director of marketing for the National Electrical Contractors Association and chairman of the National Lighting Bureau. "You want a reasonable amount of ambient lighting, as well as task lighting based on what you'll be doing in each particular area, such as lamps for reading or fluorescents for chopping vegetables in the kitchen."

As you're planning your log home's lighting scheme, consider the following:

stay on
track

Highlight different aspects of a room by installing track lighting or rail systems on walls, ceilings or exposed beams. "A little directional lighting creates interest," Rob says, "and it really shows off the walls." Rail systems are

more versatile than track lighting. Rails can bend around corners, and they're available in wavy lines and geometric shapes. "Several manufacturers make them with a warm bronze finish, which looks amazing in log homes," says Katie.

look up

To increase ambient light in a room, use uplighting. "If you have a low, light-colored ceiling, bounce light off of it with standing floor lamps, such as torcheres," suggests Rob. To brighten cathedral ceilings, add uplights at the 9-foot level, which Rob says will keep the light from getting lost in the rafters and showcase the log trusses in the process.

bounce off the walls

Fixtures attached to walls can add soft lighting, according to Rob, who suggests wall washers that highlight art. "They make the entire room glow," he says. Or try wall sconces. "In a log home, especially one with cathedral ceilings, sconces bring the light down to the human level," advises Katie. An added benefit: Side lighting flatters the face; overhead light can cast unattractive shadows.

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increase diversity

Don't rely on one ceiling fixture for the whole room's illumination; downlighting from one central location creates glare. "The trend today is moving away from overhead lighting," says Rob. Instead, include several light sources in each room, and spread them out to create three or four layers of light. A chandelier, task lamps and some kind of accent lights should do the trick, according to Katie. Three watts per square foot should sufficiently illuminate a room.
