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Building Success 101

Q: What is a compact fluorescent light bulb?

A: Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) are a type of lamp that fits into a standard light bulb socket. Advanced CFLs feature electronic instead of magnetic ballasts to eliminate most of the flickering and slow activation commonly associated with fluorescent lighting. Compared to incandescent bulbs, CFLs have a longer rated life (up to 15 times longer) and use less electricity.

New Technologies are Lighting the Way

Remember the old center-of-the-ceiling light fixture? You entered a room, hit the wall switch, and a couple of light bulbs behind a semi-transparent plate shed general, flat light over the whole room. All features of the room, good and bad, got the same emphasis. There was enough light to avoid tripping over the dog, but not enough light to read by.

Things have changed. Lighting is now a sophisticated design element of the modern home, whether that home is traditional or contemporary in style. Every aspect of lighting -- placement, function, control, style, energy-efficiency -- has evolved to offer exactly what is needed in each room.

The thoughtful placement of lighting fixtures with specific -- rather than general -- function can make a dramatic change in a room. For example, instead of a big overhead fluorescent panel, new kitchens now feature task-specific fixtures such as recessed spot lights over the sink and other work stations, strip lights under wall cabinets, or dropped fixtures over work islands or eating areas. Other examples of task lighting include automatic bulbs in cabinets and pantries, up- and down-lights that showcase landscaping or artwork, and fixtures positioned to throw light on stair treads.

Lighting controls have also come a long way from the simple wall-mounted switch. Homeowners can program or manipulate lighting schemes to create custom ambiance for a casual dinner party or an intimate evening at home. Timers, remote controls, dimmer switches, and motion sensors enhance the flexibility, beauty and convenience of a lighting design using both wired and wireless technologies.

Besides increasing the technical sophistication of their products, lighting manufacturers have had to keep up with current styles and fashions. Pendants, wall sconces, chandeliers, and domed fixtures are available in an almost endless array of styles and finishes. In addition, lighting suppliers have developed a greater range of compatible fixtures to achieve a coordinated look for all lighting products in the house.

Security lighting has also grown in popularity and available options in recent years. Inside the home, high tech wired and wireless timers can be programmed to create the illusion of activity while the owners are away. Outside, motion-activated lighting is a basic feature, especially at entries. Outdoor fixtures can highlight house numbers to assist emergency services. Lights in the garage and house can flash on and off as part of a security system that alerts neighbors or police of an unauthorized intrusion. The addition of outdoor lighting provides both increased security and esthetic appeal.



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Greater energy efficiency is a primary benefit of current lighting design. One of the easiest *and fastest* ways to save energy is to use compact fluorescent bulbs instead of the common incandescent bulbs. Compact fluorescent bulbs, or CFLs, last longer, deliver more lumens (the amount of light), emit far less heat, and consume 67% less electricity. The savings in energy more than cover the additional cost for the bulbs. Energy-efficient light fixtures and bulbs are prominent among the list of products to qualify under the federal Energy Star program, helping homeowners earn tax breaks for investing in energy smart technology.

Outdoor light fixtures are increasingly powered by solar energy and light sensors to save even more electricity. Small photovoltaic cells are built right into path and landscape products to power them only at night. These systems require no wiring or current from another source, making them safe and easy to replace as needed. Homeowners enjoy the added convenience and beauty of outdoor lighting, whether or not they remember to turn them on or off.

Professional builders incorporate modern lighting design and products in their new homes, adding long-lasting value while enhancing style, convenience, comfort, security, and efficiency.

Warm regards,

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