

# Dress your windows to let the light in

By Terri Fiez

Light should glow, not glare. Light is enjoyed most when it is softened or diffused rather than glaring and harsh. This can be accomplished with the appropriate window treatment.

Know where the light is coming from. North light is cold and clear, requiring energy-efficient window treatments. South light is warm and strong and needs to be diffused. East light is bright and warm, so block the UV rays from fading and discoloring your furnishings. West light, which is hot, calls for UV protection along with light diffusing treatment.

Determine the level of light in your room before selecting a window treatment. Then choose fabrics with the appropriate level of opacity, ranging from sheer to light-blocking. Sometimes a room needs multiple light levels, such as the brightly-lit den used as an occasional guest room.

For maximum functionality, choose blinds that let you see out when they are down. Some blinds let the light flow through them and give the room a warm glow, changing the mood in the room throughout the day.

Look for blinds that allow you to direct the light by pivoting the louvers. Some have louvers that pivot a full 180 degrees for maximum directional control. Top-down bottom-up blinds allow you to bring light in from the top while maintaining privacy in the room.

If you plan to have your window treatments open during the day, note the amount of top or side stack required. Some have very little or no stack, while others cover several inches of window when fully open, taking away that valuable daylight.

Keep in mind that the larger the louver size, the easier the blind is to see out when fully open because there are fewer louvers and more open space.

A brand new idea in blinds is Hunter Douglas Reveal with Magaview. When open, they provide twice the view-through space of traditional metal blinds yet they look like standard blinds when closed.

Motorization (either remote-control or hard-wired) allows you to direct the light or close off the light conveniently, as needed.

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Terri Fiez owns Designer's Showcase in Verona, which specializes in custom window treatments along with other interior design services. Contact Fiez at 845-7598.

# Don't be SAD



*Bring more natural light  
into your home this winter*

**By Mary Campbell**

Our daylight hours are growing scarce as we head toward winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. On the summer solstice, June 21, we have about 15½ hours of sunlight here in Wisconsin. On December 21, we will have just over eight.

As the earth makes its yearly journey around the sun, there is a period of time when the northern hemisphere is tilted away from this source of heat and light. During this time, we see that the sun does not rise as high in the sky or stay in the sky as long. It spends its days slinking slyly along the southern horizon. Shadows are long and days are short.

For many of us, this means we have precious few hours to gather up our daily allotment of sunshine. Even when we are outside, we are so bundled up against the cold, we do not have much skin exposed to the sun's healing rays.

### The benefits of sunlight

Sunlight is very important to our health because it causes the body to produce Vitamin D in the skin. Vitamin D helps us to build strong bones and teeth, boost the immune system, and even fight some cancers.

But the benefits of abundant daylight are not simply physical. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of depression evidenced by decreased energy, increased appetite and increased fatigue, is directly linked to insufficient exposure to the sun.

Commercially, natural lighting has helped to increase corporate profits across the country. Skylights in retail stores increase the natural light and substantially lower energy costs. Indeed, studies have shown that "skylit" stores experience increased customer loyalty, better product visibility, a perception of increased spaciousness and brightness, and increased sales.

In the home, increased natural lighting also causes these physical, economic, aesthetic and emotional benefits. Using sunlight instead of electric light can save energy, of course. But transforming an underutilized space into a safer, more comfortable area with light can also increase your quality of life and your property value. Read on to find ways to bring more natural light into your home this winter.

### Let the sunshine in!

"In a new construction, properly siting the building to take advantage of sunlight is important," says **Linda Page**, a designer at

**Kee Architects.** Situating a building to absorb the sun's rays when it is low in the southern sky during the winter and to be shaded from the overhead sun in the summer is called passive solar design.

Even if you are not planning a major building project, there are many ways to bring more light into your home. "Heavy window treatments often block out a lot of sunlight," says Page. "With the windows you already have, you can let a lot more light in by simplifying the treatments."

Page also recommends careful consideration of colors and materials. "Paint is an easy answer," she says. "It can come in lots of different finishes from very flat to highly reflective. Selecting smooth, shiny materials is going to bounce more light around."

If you are considering changing your windows, know that the ease that comes with replacement windows is tempered by the fact that they are usually double hung and divide the light. "Larger, single pieces of glazing let more light in," says Page. "An awning-type window or casement cranking window has no interruption visually."

"Skylights are another way to bring light into residences," says Page. But she cautions, "Be very careful of rooflines. There are maximums and minimums for good performance with the flashing to prevent water and melting snow and ice from leaking into the home."

Solatubes are another option for bringing overhead sunlight into a home or business. "A solatube is a tubular skylight," explains **Mike Mayberry** of **Brighter Concepts**. "It is different from a traditional skylight in that it is smaller, more like a light fixture." Solatubes are made of highly reflective tubing that brings the daylight from the roof to the ceiling of your room. "Even on an overcast day it can light a room," says Mayberry. "With two fourteen-inch solatubes, rarely do we have to turn lights on in the office."

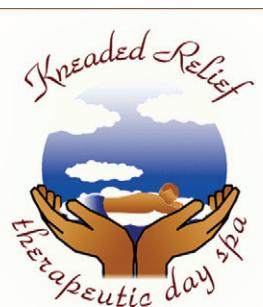


*Madison writer Mary Campbell (mattmary@tds.net) lives in a cave and drinks lots of fortified milk.*

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