astro

GUIDE TO BATHROOM LIGHTING

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INTRODUCTION

The status of bathrooms has changed over time and it is no longer a small white space designed for a quick wash. We are all spending more time in the bathroom and correspondingly more money on achieving a quality finish. So why scrimp on the lighting?

Most bathrooms are built to last ten to twenty years, so it's well-worth investing the same degree of planning and quality in the lighting particularly as it is by far the most emotionally influential element.

Never underestimate how depressing a poor lighting scheme can make you feel. Conversely, get it right and you bring the room to life and make it an enriching, positive space.

PLANNING

Plan early

After deciding where the basin, toilet, bath and shower are to be positioned, lighting should be next on the list. That way you can run all the cabling and bury it in the walls before you start tiling and decorating.

Consider how you will use the space

This will determine how many lighting 'scenes' you need to create.

A small cloakroom may need just one lighting scene, whereas a larger room with a bath enables you to have at least two: "bright" for speedy stops, and "soft and low" for slow, relaxing soaks.

To create the different scenes, plan on at least two wall switches. These can now be legally positioned inside the bathroom as long as they are an appropriate distance from wet areas, but the simplest and most popular solution is to position the switches outside adjacent to the door.

Understand the regulations

IP 44 (sometimes written as IP X4) simply means that the light fitting is "splash-proof", and therefore will withstand the typical level of moisture found in a domestic bathroom. We have the largest range of IP 44 rated products in Europe at Astro so you'll find plenty to choose from.

According to the regulations, you can use IP44 rated lights anywhere in a bathroom, apart from inside the bath itself.

A higher level of protection is IP65, ("Jet-proof") and this is the rating we at Astro consider to be safer for lights fitted inside a shower cubicle.

Top Tip:

Even small rooms with one lighting scene will benefit from a dimmer switch. This inexpensive measure ensures night time trips to the loo or early morning starts are only as bright as you want them to be. Lights that can be dimmed include mains or low-voltage halogen, or any "standard" filament-type bulbs. LEDs, fluorescent or compact-fluorescent bulbs usually can't (this includes most illuminated mirrors).

TYPES OF LIGHTING

When it comes to lighting your bathroom, there are 3 main types of lighting to consider:

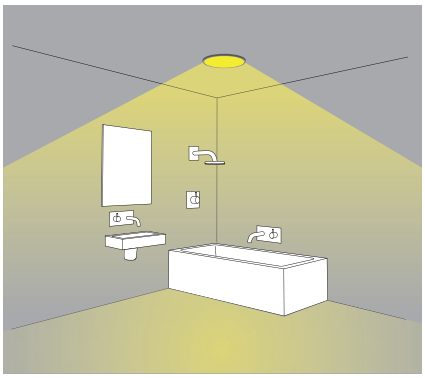
1) GENERAL 2) TASK 3) MOOD

1) GENERAL LIGHTING

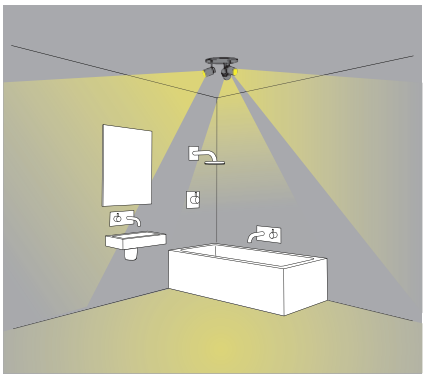
A ceiling light (a) in the centre of the room is an easy solution for illuminating the entire space but may not be so effective for creating any level of mood or interest.

If budgets are tight and you want to keep to a central ceiling solution then you could consider using surface-mounted spotlights (b). A triple spotlight can be individually directed onto three different points in the room to provide pools of light where you need it and a more interesting lighting scene.

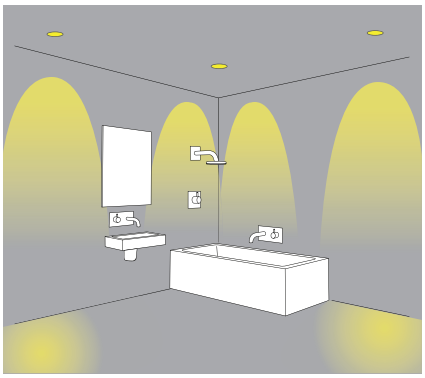
A third alternative is recessed downlights (c). You may only need three or four for a typical size 2 x 2m bathroom. Position them close to the edges of the room in order to get an attractive scalloped wash down the wall. This approach provides very good general lighting but with a gentler, more sophisticated ambiance.



(a) Ceiling light



(b) Spotlights



(c) Downlights

e.g. Dakota 300

e.g. Como Triple Round

e.g. Brembo Round

(d) Illuminated mirror (e.g. Calabria)

2) TASK LIGHTING

The basin mirror in the bathroom is the equivalent of the desk in the office. It's the hub of operations, where most of the 'work' takes place.

There are several options, but most effective is a solution that illuminates both sides of the face to ensure an even, flattering glow with no shadows. You can achieve this with either an illuminated mirror or wall lights positioned either side of the mirror.

Illuminated mirrors
(sometimes called "back-lit")

Every basin needs a mirror, so illuminated mirrors provide a simple two-in-one solution. Some also incorporate shaver sockets.

Choose from mirrors with integrated horizontal or vertical lighting (d).

Some clever products also provide ambient lighting by giving a gentle wash of light behind the mirror which illuminates the wall and makes it appear to float (examples Flair (e) and Fuji Wide from Astro).

Top Tip:

If you want to keep your mirror mist-free, a simple and inexpensive solution is to stick an electric demister pad onto the back. If you have an illuminated mirror, these will already have some slight residual warmth that will normally discourage condensation, but a demister pad can easily be added if your bathroom is particularly steamy.

(e) Flair

(f) Wall lights e.g. Monza Plus 400

TASK LIGHTING continued...

Wall lights

Take a leaf out of the hotel designer's style book by fitting IP44-rated wall lights either side of a mirror (f). Not only does this give a very sophisticated 5-star look, but it enables you to fit a mirror that has been cut to exactly the size that best fits the space. Available from budget to luxury prices, they offer a competitive alternative to the illuminated mirror option.

Cabaret

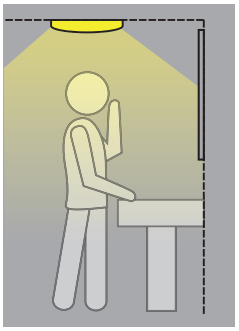
Tube

TASK LIGHTING continued...

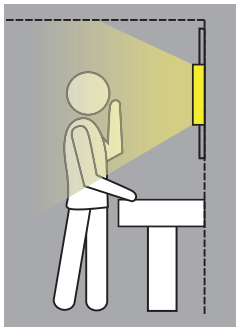
Top Tip:

Make sure that you have no lighting directly over your head at the basin, as this will create unflattering shadows (g). Wall lights mounted either side of the mirror, or using an illuminated mirror will create a more even spread of light on the face (h).

(g) Mirror lit from above



(h) Mirror lit from two sides



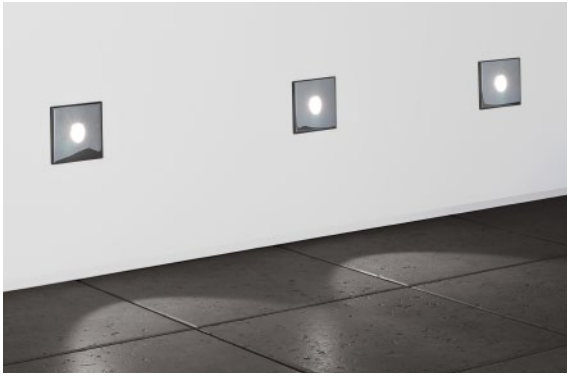
(i) Magnifying mirror attachment on Fuji Wide mirror

TASK LIGHTING continued...

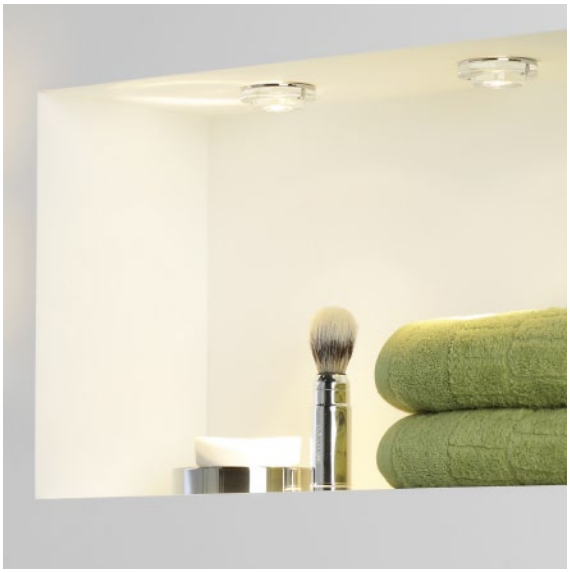
For close work

A magnifying mirror is an invaluable aid for shaving, applying make-up and other personal grooming. Choose from a separate illuminated mirror which can be freely positioned as it incorporates all-round lighting (j) or a non-lit model that can be attached to the main bathroom mirror for a two-in-one solution (i). Either way, a bit like air-conditioning in the car, once you have it, you'll never go back.

(j) Magnifying mirror e.g. Niimi Round



(k) LEDs in at skirting height e.g. Tango



(l) LEDs in a storage niche e.g. Mint LED round

(m) Wall-mounted LED e.g. Bloc

3) MOOD LIGHTING

This is where you can have fun and be creative. In the very least you can dim the lights to provide a softer atmosphere, but you can enhance the night time lighting scene significantly with a few extra strategically positioned lights.

LEDs

Recessed LEDs at skirting height (k) are great for providing a wash of light across the floor. One bright idea is to continue the bath panel down to just above the floor and position a strip of LEDs behind it to cast a gentle glow out from behind the panel and make the bath appear to float. If you are building-in niches for display or storage, fit LED downlights to really bring it to life (l). Small wall-mounted LED lights can be used to illuminate designated spots in the bathroom and provide light up and down the wall (m). These can offer good alternative general illumination at night time, when more powerful lamps would be too strong.