

Best Lighting for Aging Eyes



An opaque liner inside the shades of this swing arm lamp and floor lamp, along with a translucent lens at the top and bottom, helps lessen glare and direct light toward your reading material.

Q. “Which fluorescent and LED light bulbs offer the best reading light for senior citizens—and for the rest of us? The typical 60W bulbs just don’t suffice. Thanks for *enlightening* us.”

A: That’s my job... and I’m *delighted* to do it. Good light for reading and other tasks goes beyond just wattage. Here are some guidelines to consider as our eyes begin to age-

1. Unavoidably, older eyes need more light to read, or to wash those hard-to-reach spots in the shower. To improve our visual acuity, the light needs to be whiter (i.e. closer in color to daylight than to incandescent light).
2. To avoid glare and the resulting eye strain, a shielded light source is best. So, a table lamp with an opaque shade is better than one with a translucent shade for reading, knitting or self-tattooing. It’s better to have multiple light sources in a room than to rely on a single lamp.
3. Ideally, a task light should come between your head and the work surface; otherwise, your head could create a shadow.

Now to answer your request more specifically, CFLs offer some nice choices. Both MaxLite and Earthtronics, among others, offer three-way options for table and floor lamps to replace the incandescent bulbs we grew up with. Earthtronics makes screw-in 32W, 42W and 65W CFLs that can provide the same amount of light as a 120W or 250W incandescent bulb. That’s pretty bright.

Right now, LEDs have a little way to go before they can offer adequate reading light, but there are some promising fixtures that are due to come out in the very near future (manufacturers, let me know what you have to offer). If you have a desk situation with a shelf above, take a look at the ZX Series by Radionic Hi-Tech Inc. It offers a bright white light, which is good for aging eyes. The company will soon be offering a warm color version for the young whippersnappers.



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