

Chandelier Buying Guide

A statement lighting fixture for centuries, chandeliers bring general illumination and decoration. Learn more about chandelier parts, placement, and types.



Offering general illumination and a bold decorative statement in any setting, chandeliers have been an interior lighting staple for centuries. These types of overhead lights are defined as an ambient light source, meaning these fixtures dispel uniform light from an indirect source. Large chandeliers are commonly placed above dining tables or in high-ceilinged foyers as a showpiece lighting fixture, while small chandeliers offer scaled decorative impact in other settings. Chandelier types includes a wide breadth of styles and variations, and can appear today in bathrooms, bedrooms, or even a nursery. These types of fixtures are commonly crafted from a combination of glass, crystal, and metals, such as hand-forged iron, steel, and bronze. Most models include a canopy, chain, central body, arms, and bulbs. Popular chandelier features include crystal prisms and flame-shaped bulbs, recalling sophisticated lighting trends from the 19th century. Chandeliers are often associated with opulent living and grandiose aesthetics, though modern, simple designs are widely available. Numerous factors must be considered when purchasing a chandelier.

Chandelier Construction

The Fixture



Chandeliers are highly decorative lighting fixtures and commonly include an intricate system of parts. Some chandelier parts are purely decorative, others are purely functional, and many have both functional and decorative value. Generally, the more parts a chandelier has, the more intricate and ornate its design. Common chandelier parts include:

- **Canopy:** the chandelier fixture component that sits flush against the ceiling surface and covers the ceiling box. Canopies are located at the top of the chandelier. The light canopy may also house a transformer in low voltage chandeliers.
- **Chain:** The chain links the principal body of the chandelier to the light canopy, and determines how far from the ceiling the chandelier will hang. Long chain lengths are suited to tall entryways, while a chandelier over a dining table calls for a shorter chain. Linked metal rings is a popular chain style, that carries a vintage appearance. Long strings of crystal prisms or beads that cascade down the sides of a chandelier are also referred to as chains.
- **Column:** The vertical rod at the center of the chandelier. The chandelier arms extend from the column.
- **Bowl:** Bowls refer to various sphere-shaped orbs along the center column of the chandelier. Bowls are integrated into the column design for a seamless look. These components establish the general body shape of the chandelier, and often include etched glass or intricate metal designs.
- **Arm:** Arms extend from the center column of the chandelier, and are a prime component in establishing the aesthetic of the fixture. The length of the arms determine the overall width of the chandelier. Arms can be curved, angular, or feature looping scroll designs. Each arm typically holds one bulb at its end. Crystal prisms are often attached to the arms.
- **Candle cup:** Candle cups were originally designed to catch falling wax from flame-candles on a chandelier. Today, candle cups serve a purely decorative function, offering a look in line with classic chandelier styles.
- **Candle tube:** Candle tubes are popular in traditional chandelier design, but less common on modern models. These components mimic the look of tall flame candles. The chandelier bulbs are screwed into the top of the candle tube.

The Bulb

Chandeliers are an ambient lights source, and are commonly compatible with a specific type of bulb. Flame-shaped bulbs are the most popular option for traditional chandeliers, though modern designs or chandeliers with opaque shades may accommodate a wider variety of bulb types. Each bulb types carries unique advantages and disadvantages.

Flame-Shaped Bulbs

Flame-shaped bulbs imitate the look of a small candle flame. These bulbs were originally used as replacements for candles in the early 20th century and can today add to a vintage aesthetic.

Incandescent

- Pros: Emit the soft light tone we are used to seeing, inexpensive
- Cons: Need to be replaced often, use the most energy

LED

- Pros: Energy saving, very long lives (up to 20 years)
- Cons: Expensive, color varies from traditional incandescent bulbs

Fluorescent

- Pros: Use 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs, emit little heat, last 10x longer than incandescent bulbs
- Cons: Expensive, not dimmable, color varies from traditional incandescent bulbs, harsh color tone

The Dimmer

Dimmers are a popular complement to chandeliers in a variety of applications. Dimmers allow you to adjust the light being emitted by the fixture to create ambient lighting ideal to any particular time of day or function of a room.

Powering Your Chandelier

Chandeliers are either low voltage or high voltage. Low voltage chandeliers, defined at 10V, 12V, or 24V are more common. High voltage chandeliers operate at 120V. If your chandelier is low voltage, it will require a transformer to operate properly. Many low voltage chandeliers include a transformer housed in the canopy of the fixture, and do not require any special installation.

Low Voltage

Low voltage lights are defined at 10V, 12V or 24V. Low voltage fixtures are a modern option, and were not previously available. Low voltage lights include a low voltage fixture and a transformer or power pack.

- **Pros:** Safer than high voltage systems, more energy efficient, easier to install and adjust, allows for more bulb types and variations
- **Cons:** Requires compatible low voltage equipment (transformer), more expensive

High Voltage

High voltage lights are defined as 120V. High voltage chandeliers limit what types of bulbs can be used, making high voltage undesirable in chandelier design where bulbs are commonly exposed and highly stylized.

- **Pros:** Same voltage as appliances, lower cost fixtures, bulbs, and installation
- **Cons:** Less energy efficient, high operating costs, limited bulb options

Note: Always consult a professional lighting electrician before purchasing or installing a chandelier. This guide is not intended to take the place of a professional's best opinion or serve as a technical safety manual.

Chandelier Types

Chandelier types include many styles and variations. Many chandelier designs incorporate a varied mix of features, and may bridge two or more chandelier type classifications. Popular features include fabric and glass shades, and crystals or bead embellishments. Chandelier types include:



Crystal Chandeliers

Crystal chandeliers are what we generally imagine when we think of a chandelier. These types of chandeliers are generally elegant and sophisticated, with crystal prisms, scrolling arms, and highly stylized bodies. Crystal chandeliers are oftentimes found over dining room tables or in grand entryways, though they can also appear in powder rooms, walk-in closets, and bathrooms. Modern crystal chandeliers are also available. Popular traditional styles include ornate fixtures with many crystals, and fixtures with only a few crystals combined with shades.



Tiered Chandeliers

Tiered chandeliers include layers of arms suspended from different vertical points on the center column of the chandelier. Tiered chandeliers can have anywhere from two up to five or more tiers.



Downlight Chandeliers

Downlight chandeliers have arms that point down as opposed to up. These types of lights generally include shades to dim the downward facing bulbs, and are a popular option over dining room tables.

Chandelier Style

Chandeliers run the gamut of styles, finishes, and embellishments. Popular finish colors include silver, bronze, and gold. Chandelier styles include:



Transitional

Transitional chandeliers bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary styles, lifting elements from both new and timeless design for a unique look. These fixtures may include sleek lines with some decorative ornamentation, elegant curved frames, and light detailing. These chandeliers can be the perfect combination of traditional elegance, and sleek modernity. Transitional chandeliers are very versatile, and are perfect for someone who loves to re-decorate and play with different design styles.



Traditional

Traditional chandeliers draw upon time-honored motifs for their design. These fixtures are highly ornamental, and may recall a vintage European aesthetic. More so than other fixture types, traditional chandeliers may include components



that offer no functional use, but recall the familiar appearance of antique chandeliers, such as candle cups and candle tubes.



Rustic

Popular in country or quaint home design, rustic lighting integrates organic shapes, textures, and weathering for a warm, relaxed look with regained modern appeal. Crafted from metal, wood, or even antlers and horns, rustic chandeliers are mainly characterized by their materials. Rustic chandeliers look perfectly placed in cabins and lodges.



Industrial

Contemporary industrial style mimics turn-of-the-century factory design, for a gritty, urban look. These lights use patinaed metals, vintage bulbs, and reclaimed motifs to achieve their signature aesthetic.



Modern

Modern chandeliers can be the perfect focal point above a contemporary dining room table, or in an updated living room. Modern chandeliers can also offer a nice contrast as an accent piece in a traditionally decorated space.

Chandelier Sizes

When choosing a chandelier, proportion is key. Buying the wrong sized chandelier, either too big or too small, can draw unwanted attention to the fixture. The goal is to have your chandelier blend in effortlessly and compliment the space. Mini chandeliers can be the perfect accent in a small cozy room; however in a large foyer the same chandelier would look underwhelming. You can easily hang small, medium, and large chandeliers throughout your house, as long as they are hung in a complementary space.



Mini & Small Chandeliers

Mini and small chandeliers typically range in size from nine to twelve inches in diameter, making a big impact without taking up much space. Mini and small chandeliers are perfect for intimate spaces like bathrooms, powder rooms, walk-in closets, laundry rooms, and nurseries. Two mini chandeliers can also appear well in larger spaces, as a substitute for one medium sized fixture.

Medium Chandeliers

Medium chandeliers are the most common type of chandelier and will work well in practically any space. These types of chandeliers generally measure close to 28" in diameter. Depending on the size of your dining room table, medium chandeliers will work well above the table, acting as a focal point. Medium chandeliers appear well placed in the center of an average-sized bedroom, living room, or kitchen. This size is also ideal for hallways, and for entryways that are on the smaller to medium side.

Large Chandeliers

Large chandeliers are perfect for large rooms and open spaces that are in need of a wow-factor. These chandeliers range from 32" up to hundreds of inches in ballrooms or hotel entryways. This size chandelier works well hung in a large formal dining room or in a large entryway or foyer. Entryway chandeliers can be a great way to make a lasting impression on guests when they enter and leave your home. The most important things to consider when hanging an entry way chandelier are placement and height.

Note: The National Electrical Code mandates that large chandeliers that weigh over 50 lbs must be secured to a building's structure. We recommend consulting a professional to properly install chandeliers in this weight class.

Chandelier Placement

Entryway Chandeliers

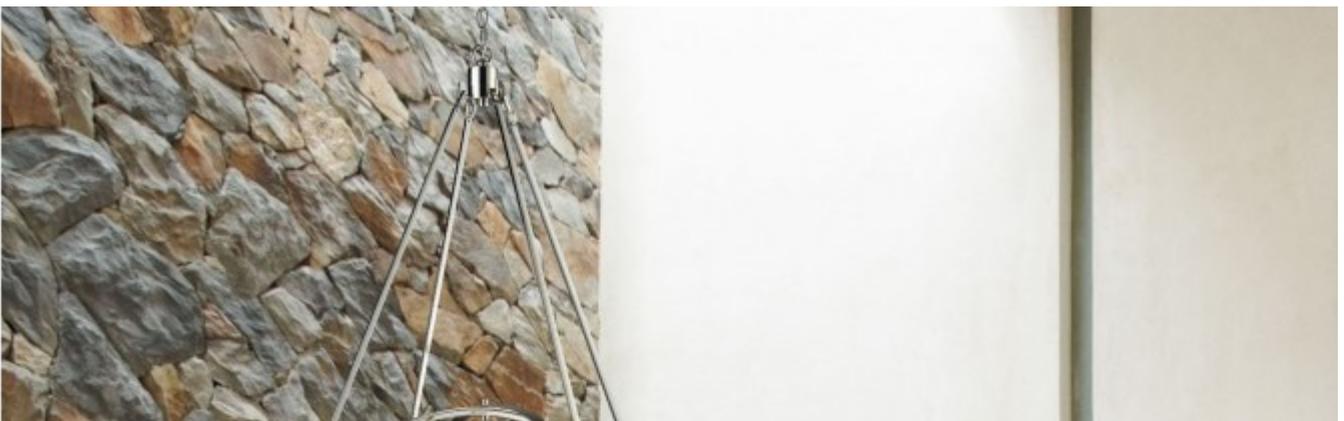
To decide where to place your entryway chandelier, the first step is to take stock of your space. Chandeliers shouldn't hang below the second floor in two-story entryways. In standard height foyers, a chandelier should be at least seven feet above the floor. The chandelier should be in the center of the space, in most cases directly in line with the front door to appear balanced.



Height: The height of your chandelier should reflect the height of your ceilings. Most designers recommend that for each additional foot of ceiling height you should add about three inches to the suspension height.

Dining Room Chandeliers

Chandeliers are perfect for anchoring a dining room table, and add to a timeless dining aesthetic. The most important things to consider when hanging a chandelier above a dining room table are height, size, and placement of the fixture.





Size: Choose a chandelier that has a diameter one foot narrower than the table's width. This will ensure that no guest bumps their head on your fixture while excusing themselves from the table.

Height: A good rule of thumb to follow for hanging dining room chandeliers is that the bottom of the chandelier should hang between 30 and 36 inches from the top of the table, assuming you have an eight foot ceiling. You can raise your chandelier even higher if you want to leave enough room below for a flower arrangement or a centerpiece on the table.

Placement: Chandeliers should always be centered and hung in the middle of the dining room table. If two small chandeliers are hung above a dining room table, they should be placed in a line parallel with the table's longest side, and at an even distance from the center of the table.

Living Room Chandeliers

For optimal illumination and a well-balanced look, place the chandelier at the center of the living space. Since this space

sees a high level of traffic, but sure to hang the chandelier at least 7 feet above the ground. A living room chandelier will ideally be placed directly above a coffee table or large ottoman.

Bathroom Chandeliers

A small chandelier adds a touch of glamour and sophistication to most bathrooms. The chandelier can be placed above a tub, at the center of the room, or above a vanity. Leave 8 feet of clearance between the highest edge of the tub and the lowest point of the chandelier if hanging above the bathtub.

Chandelier Care

Chandeliers constructed from certain kinds of metal will naturally tarnish with age. The tarnishing process yields to a heritage, antiques look that is widely desirable. To slow this natural tarnishing, appropriate wax cleaners can be used.

Always use a stepladder and a drop cloth placed on the floor below your chandelier when cleaning your fixture. A ladder makes it easier to effectively and safely clean the chandelier, and a drop cloth will catch any dust, chandelier parts, or crystals that may fall from the fixture during the cleaning process.

Use cotton gloves when cleaning your chandelier to prevent fingerprints, and wipe down the frame portion of the fixture with a dry cotton cloth. To remove stubborn stains or buildup from crystals use a natural, water-based cleanser, and avoid getting any wet solutions on metal parts of the chandelier. Regularly dust your chandelier using a dry cloth or wool duster.