LED 101 – How to Make the Switch

Eco-friendly home features are quickly becoming the new norm, and LED lighting is a great place to start. Have you decided to switch from incandescent to LED lighting for your home? Are you wanting to save money and energy so maybe you are thinking about going with fluorescent or CFL?

LED lighting has become more accessible and affordable over the last decade, and is a great place to start with your home *or* business makeover. The technology behind LEDs allows you to reduce 100 watts of lighting down to almost 20 watts, on average. Since LEDs are longer-lasting, you replace bulbs less often, reduce waste, and spend less on maintenance in the long run. LEDs also produce significantly less heat, therefore indirectly saving on cooling costs.

Check out this example of a kitchen we remodeled. The client has a combination of recessed and custom under-cabinet LED lights that give the room varying effects!

So where can you start?

Hard-to-reach lights: Any light bulb that's up high, such as vaulted ceilings or over stairwells, can be difficult to switch out on a regular basis. Changing these lights to LEDs are useful because they last a lot longer and it will be a while before the next time they burn out. So you will save money on the cost of bulbs and possibly having to hire someone to maintenance that light.

Heavily-trafficked areas: Your living room, dining room and kitchen tend to use more light than other rooms. When lights are on in the house, they're usually on in those rooms. Switching to LEDs in these rooms will save you more money in the long run than any other room in the house, by reducing the amount of energy used in your home each day.

Replace lights in groups/sets: Have you noticed that as incandescent bulbs get older, they tend to get more orange/reddish? It's definitely a good idea to replace lights in sets to maintain color uniformity. Fixtures with multiple bulbs should all be replaced at once to keep colors and light distribution even.

Outdoor / Security Lights: These lights will more than likely be on all night long, compared to interior lighting only being on part of the day/evening, and are another good starting point to saving on your lighting costs. Many LEDs are compatible with timers, photocells, and motion sensors.

Can you use your existing dimmers?

Maybe, but more than likely your dimmer switches will need to be changed out also. (1) Not all dimmers are compatible with LEDs, and (2) not all LEDs are dimmable. Dimmer switches are often more expensive than the bulbs themselves, so you might want to change dimmers last if you're trying to save money on installation costs.

Can you just swap the bulbs to LED, or does the whole fixture have to be changed?
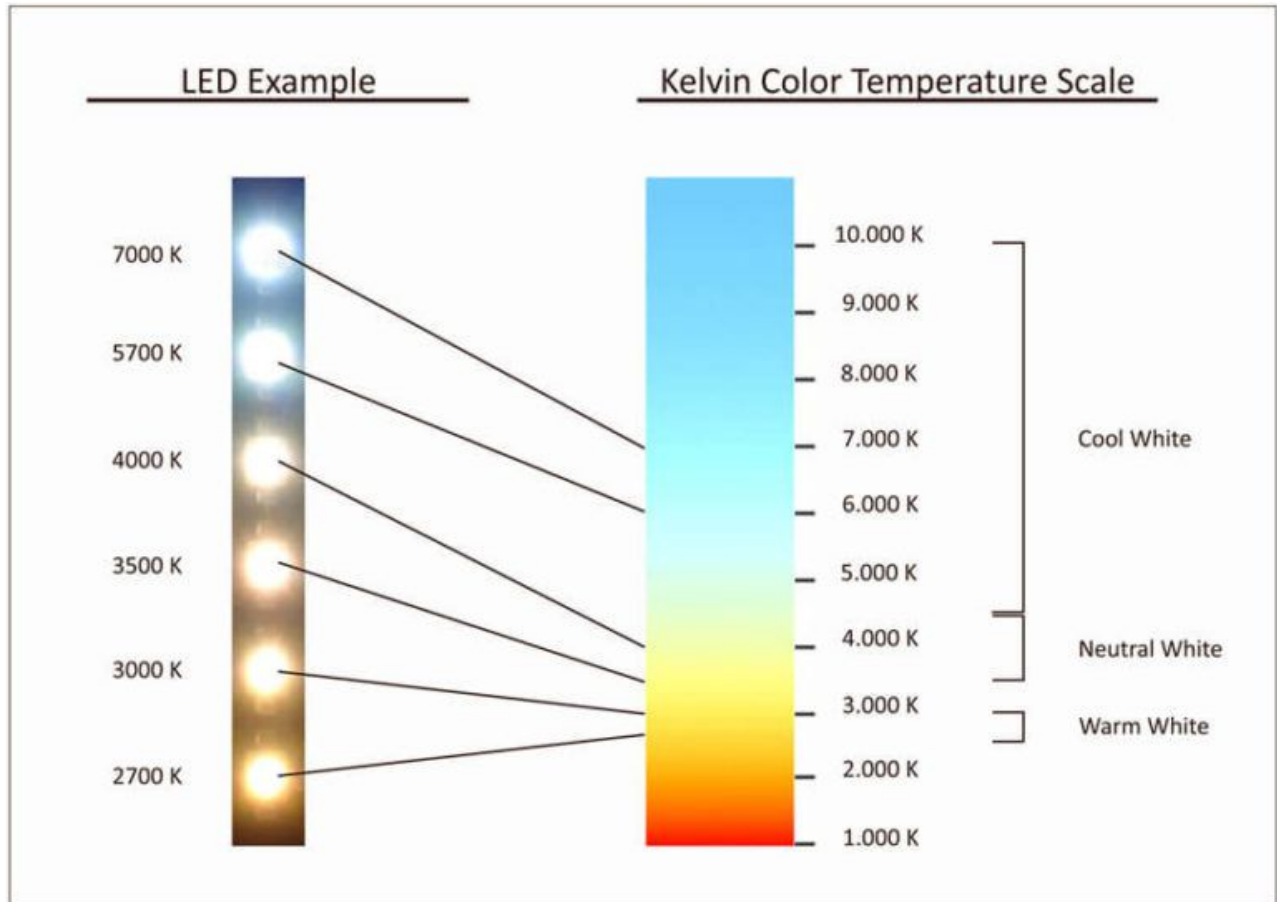
It depends on the fixture. Some recessed lights, chandeliers and lamps can be easily changed with a simple bulb swap (like the pendant shown here, using candelabra-style bulbs). Older light fixtures may not be compatible, so it's best to test it out or have us check it out for you.

Most boxes show what the bulb looks like, and many are designed after the bulb it's meant to replace. So it's pretty easy to pick the right size for your fixture.
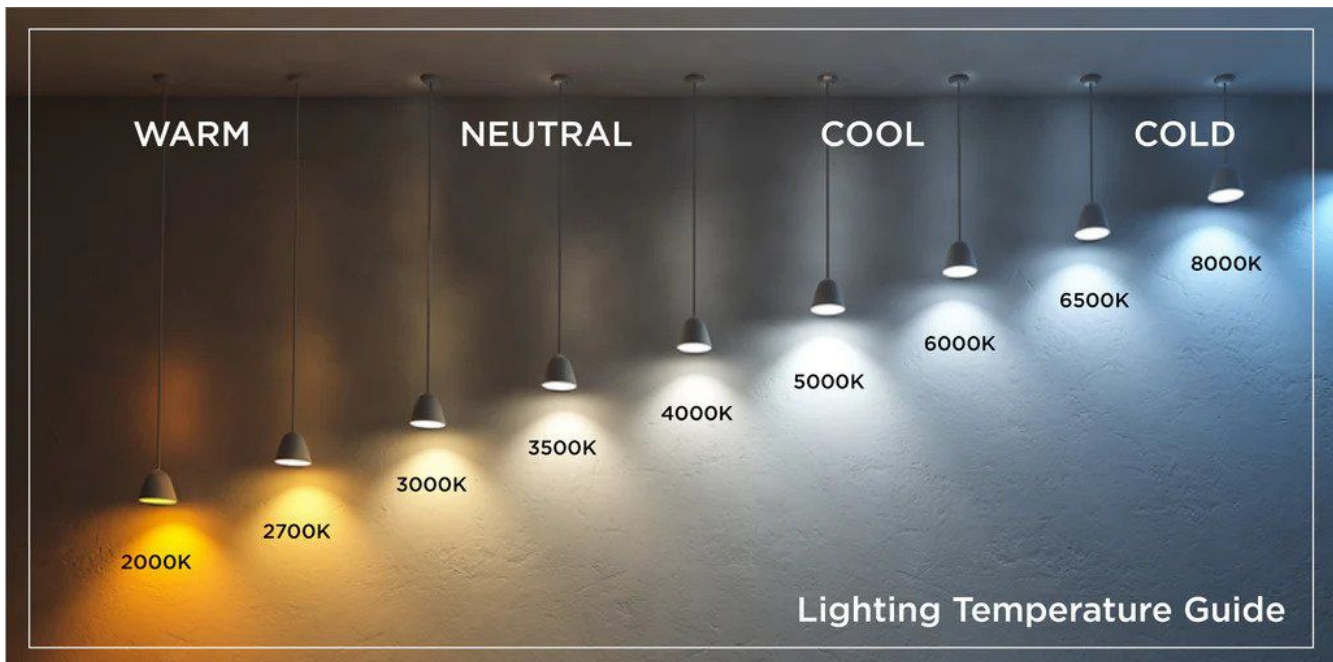
How To Pick LED Colors

LEDs are color-rated based on the Kelvin scale. It's a good idea to check how color temperatures change the way room looks. See the image below to get an idea of how the lighting may appear, which somewhat mimics how daylight colors change throughout the day.

Tips:

- If you want an equivalent to incandescent without changing the look of your current incandescent bulbs, we recommend going with a warm white (2700-3000K) for the closest match.
- To highlight artwork or certain areas of your home, stay with a neutral color, around 3500-4000K, so artwork color quality does not clash with the light.
- For outside security lighting, our suggestion is either neutral or cooler daylight temperatures.