

CHANDELIERS

Glamorous grandeur

The chandelier used to be a mark of a person's arrival into the upper echelons of high society. Clad in twinkling crystal, chandeliers would greet you decorously in the foyer and reception rooms of any well-appointed home. Traditionally, it was rare to find a chandelier in any other room, and even more rare to find one in a starter home.

However, times have changed, says Melissa Davidson from The Lighting Warehouse: "Today, there has been a popularity explosion with regards to the glam-slam, old world charm of chandeliers and they are being used in practically any room in the home — from modest homes to magnificent mansions."

Design trends and materials

Davidson notes that chandeliers come in a wide variety of styles, sizes and materials: "The most well known chandeliers, the crystal and glass chandeliers, are exceptionally beautiful, but they are generally prohibitively expensive to most homeowners — starting at around R20 000, with some antique chandeliers fetching as much as R50 000. Most commercial faux crystal chandeliers today are made from acrylic — a material that still offers a similar dazzling aesthetic, as well as being far more affordable, lighter and more durable."

Other popular materials used for chandeliers include brass, wrought iron and metal with an elegant satin-finish. Davidson notes that a notable trend in modern chandelier design involves mixing materials and styles within one fixture: "It is not unusual, for example, to find a rustic cast-iron fixture with crystals hanging from it, or different metals and types of glass all incorporated into one fixture. Modern styles are decidedly eclectic and chandeliers lend themselves neatly to this mix-and-match design culture."



Sheer extravagance that won't break the bank. This chandelier is a great option for large rooms or for double volume spaces. It is in fact not made from real crystal or glass, but from cast acrylic, which makes it lighter, more durable and more affordable. This fitting also comes in smoky black, Morticia and red, Scarlett.

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A perfect accent for a French Provencal or rustic home, the Amelia chandelier comes in either a light cream or an ivory hue. Its wrought iron look makes it a stunning option for the kitchen or patio area.

Styles and colours

With regards to style, Davidson says that you can look for a chandelier that is inspired by the period reflected in the room in which it will be featured, but you don't necessarily have to: "Many contemporary designs are a blend of traditional elements with modern materials, which makes them work with a variety of styles." She explains that there are a variety of different styles of chandeliers, but most of them can be grouped into the following four categories:

- **Crystal** — Old world chandeliers made out of genuine crystal, glass or acrylic. These can in addition boast crystal drops, mini crystal drop interlinking chains or beading along the arms.
- **Wrought iron** — Traditionally made by welding iron, but nowadays the modern way is to make these fittings using hollow aluminium tubes. Globes are either exposed or have glass or material shades to diffuse the light.
- **Modern** — Usually comprising satin chrome bodied chandeliers. They boast a minimalist look and contemporary clean lines.
- **Combination chandeliers** — A combination of any of the above — for instance a wrought iron-look chandelier with clear glass crystal drops.

"The freshest face in chandelier design is a clean and simple aesthetic, with a dash of dazzling glam, suitable for more contemporary spaces. Although sparkling crystal remains the most popular, today's chandeliers are available in a multitude of other colours, the most popular being red and black. Opaque, frosted glass remains a popular choice as well," notes Davidson.



The Angela chandelier's satin chrome finish and crystal drop accents make it an ideal choice for a more modern aesthetic.

Choosing the right size

Choosing the right sized chandelier for any particular space is an essential part of the selection process, says Davidson: "It is all about getting the proportions right. If a chandelier is too large, it will overpower the space. If it is too small, it will be lost. In order to make sure your chandelier is the right size for the space in which it will be featured, you need to consider the height of the ceiling, the size of the room, the form and design of the chandelier, as well as the room's decor and furniture."

Davidson says that with regards to size, the rule of thumb is to add the length and the width of the room in metres, multiply the answer by 100, and then divide the answer by 12. This will provide you with an estimate diameter measurement in centimetres. For example, if your room measures 4m by 5m, then the chandelier you choose should have a diameter of 75cm.

If the chandelier is going to be hung over a dining room table, Davidson notes that it should have a minimum clearance of around 0,75m above the table to the lowest part of the chandelier, so that it does not block people's line of vision across the table. Also, in order to keep the proportions right, the diameter of the chandelier should measure about half of the width of the table. If you are hanging a chandelier in the centre of a room, it will need a 2m walking clearance from the floor to the lowest part of the chandelier.

Lighting and bulbs

Gone are the days of installing only one central overhead light fixture — today, designer use lighting in a way that bounces light off of walls or ceilings to generate a mood of expansiveness. "The arrangement of one overhead lighting source either casts light down or diffuses it in all directions, which affects spatial quality by creating dramatic shadows and dim rooms. The opposite affect is achieved by bouncing light off of walls and ceilings, which turns these surfaces into giant reflectors of sorts. Think of your chandelier as the 'central' fixture in a room, and then add other types of complimentary lighting, such as sconces, pendants and flush mounts, to create a spacious feeling. Adding matching wall lights that are from the same family as the chandelier would be first prize in terms of a coherent style," explains Davidson.

Nowadays the majority of chandelier globe sockets carry 40-watt globes, whereas before it used to be 60-watt globes (which was not as energy efficient). Commenting on the number of globes required, Davidson says: "Smaller rooms will be fine with a chandelier of six to eight bulbs, but larger rooms may require fittings with eight or more bulbs. If your room is especially large, you may also want to consider adding sconces or the chandeliers' matching wall lights, if available, which should be installed approximately 1,5m from the floor and 1,8m or more apart," says Davidson.

Be sure to choose the correct light bulbs for your particular chandelier, warns Davidson: "For example, don't use the traditional 2U or 4U CFL globes if your chandelier has exposed globes. Rather use a frosted candle CFL globe. With glass or material shades covering your globes, one could use a 2U or 4U shaped CFL or even a golf ball CFL."

Davidson also recommends installing a dimmer switch to control the room's ambience: "Whether they are ornate and multi-armed or simply feature a large-scale bowl, chandeliers need a dimmer so homeowners can control the intensity of light. For example, if your chandelier is positioned over your dining room table, dimming your chandelier creates a lovely warm ambience. Most of the time, the lighting capability of a chandelier is more than is actually necessary to light the space, and as such they should always be controlled by a dimmer to add to the room's aesthetic appeal, depending on the need at the time."

If one chooses a dimmable halogen candle globe (28w), then you need not change your existing dimmer switch. If you go for the new dimmable CFL globes however, you would require a specialised dimmer switch. Whilst this means spending a bit more money — it is obviously preferable, as CFL's boast an 80% energy saving, whereas halogen is only 30%. Says Davidson: "With LED being the latest hot news in going green, energy saving and globe technology — LED candle globes are also now available for your chandelier and come in both clear or frosted types. Unfortunately, the dimmable versions of this globe are not available in South Africa just yet, but will soon be available."



The Aragon chandelier boasts a wrought iron look and its heavier coppery brown colour makes it particularly well suited to Tuscan and more traditional interiors.