

House Helper: August 28, 2007

Question: Is track lighting outdated? How can I upgrade it and what should I replace it with?

Track lighting continues to be popular since its introduction into the residential market. Its appearance, however, has changed dramatically over the years. Versatility for both general and task lighting is what continues to drive its popularity.

There are numerous options available today to update an older track lighting system. Selection of a replacement system should be driven first by the function of the space and the specific lighting needs and then second by the desired style and appearance.

Generally, we do not see track lighting with ceilings of 8 feet or lower. Recessed lighting is used more commonly because it provides the appearance of more height. The clean lines of recessed lighting and the options on the market today, both directional and down lights, meet a variety of lighting needs very well.

With ceiling heights above 8 feet, track lighting continues to be a popular choice. There are low voltage and line voltage systems available. Choices range from monorail systems, which consist of a flexible rail that suspends from the ceiling and onto which fixtures or pendants can be attached, to the standard tracks that mount to the ceiling and onto which a variety of fixtures can be mounted.

There are many proprietary systems on the market today, meaning the fixtures are not interchangeable with other systems. Over the years, three standards developed and are referred to as H, J or L. Research and select one of these standards in order to have flexibility in updating or adding to the system over time. Many manufacturers offer fixtures that meet these standards. We recommend consulting a lighting professional to ensure that your money is well spent.