

Proper Lighting For a Jewelry Store

By [Howard Gurock](#)

Proper store lighting can attract more customers to any establishment, help sell more product, and strengthen a store's image. Many designers argue that the most important element of a store's design may be its lighting. Unfortunately, lighting is often the most neglected component of store design.

Ceiling Height: The height of a store's ceiling is one of the most important factors that goes into a plan for lighting a jewelry store in such a way that the merchandise looks spectacular. As the source of light moves farther away from the merchandise the power and intensity of the light diminishes. Stores with higher ceilings (over 9') face some challenges with lighting. Stores with ceiling that are taller either have to use more lights that are spaced closer together to illuminate a showcase or bring the light source closer by dropping down a track or using a pendant.

Color: The color of light is measure in Kelvin (temperature). The higher the temperature (Kelvin) reading the cooler the color of light and the lower the temperature the warmer the color. For example a light that is 3000K would be a warmer color and a light that is 4000K would be a cooler light. As the temperature of light gets too high (over 4200K) the color of the light begins to take on a blue quality. Lights that are in the 5500K to 6500K will look "blue" to the eye.

Bulb Life/Quality: How long a bulb is expected to last is based upon its "rated life". The better bulbs have a rated life in excess of 10,000 hours. The quality of a bulb can also be measured by its CRI (Color Rendition Index). The higher the CRI of a bulb the better the quality of the light that it projects will be. CRI numbers over 80 signify a very high quality of light. CRI numbers over 90 signify an exemplary quality of light.

Power of Light: The power of a bulb is measured in lumens. The amount of light that is generated is measured in Lux or, more commonly, in foot-candles ("fc"). The higher the lumens the higher the amount of foot-candles that will be generated by the bulb.

Different Light Sources: There are three main sources of light that are used in Jewelry stores. They are (1) Ceramic Metal Halide (2) Halogen (3) Fluorescent. LED technology is being used more and more but is still far behind the main three. The best source of lighting for jewelry is still Ceramic Metal Halide. This is due to its qualities. They are energy efficient, powerful (lumens over 6000), come in warm and cool colors (3000K to 4200K) has excellent CRI (over 80 and in most cases over 90 CRI) and can provide foot-candles that can exceed 400. Halogens are hot, have lower CRI's, do not maintain their color over the life of the bulb and are about a quarter to a third of power of a ceramic metal halide. Fluorescents are energy efficient but do not project enough power to be useful in a jewelry store when it comes to illuminating merchandise.

LED's are the "buzz" but they have limitations and problems. LED technology is constantly changing. An LED fixture you buy today is (as in the case of a personal computer) will be outdated within a year. Keeping a consistent color of the LED over time can be problematic due to the changes in LED technology. LED's can make jewelry look great inside of the showcase but are not powerful enough to be placed over the case where the sale is actually made. Due to this limitation, a different source of light is required above the showcase such as ceramic metal halide or halogen. This is where the problems occur. What happens is that there are two different sources of light each making a piece of jewelry look different. As an example ... a customer see's a piece of jewelry inside of a showcase being lit by an LED strip. They ask to have the salesperson take it out for them to see it. It is taken out and is now over the glass being illuminated by a DIFFERENT light source which makes the piece look different. The customer begins to wonder if the lighting inside the case is there to "trick" them into thinking the jewelry looks good. As sales are finalized on the "glass" having a light source that makes the jewelry look the same inside the case as it does above the case is crucial to closing a sale.

TIPS:

(1) Most designers who understand the proper way to light a jewelry store will tell you that you light "for diamonds" and the rest of your merchandise will survive do just fine AND that if you light for gold your diamonds will die. Diamonds require a bright white light that provides enough power to make them sparkle. Diamonds should be shown under lights that are in the 4000 -4200K range. This provides a beautiful white color that stops short of taking on blue color qualities. Gold and warmer colored stones look the best under warmer colored lights 3000K to 3500K. However, if a store is going to use a single color of light throughout its showcases then the adage of "lighting for diamonds" is the way to proceed.

(2) Make certain that lighting is powerful enough to produce a minimum of 200fc. Having light that is less than 200fc is universally agreed to be lower than the minimum amount of light to properly light jewelry, especially diamonds. Readings of between 200 and 400fc is the optimum amount of light power over a showcase depending on the store owner's personal preference as to the amount of light that they think looks best.

(3) Have ambient or general lighting be warmer and less powerful than the lighting over the showcases. The human eye is attracted to brighter light. If the general lighting in a store is the same color and power as that over the showcases then there will be nothing to attract the customers to the showcases and the store will have a cold non-inviting feel to it. By having the general (ambient) lighting less powerful (about 75fc) and of a warmer color (between 2500 and 300K) the lighting over the merchandise will stand out and attract the customer to the cases.

(4) When lighting a window display that has natural sunlight shining into it use twice the amount of light that would be commonly used over a showcase in order to combat the power of the sun.

When upgrading lighting the trend is commonly a change from Halogen technology. Customers who are using Halogen and who switch to ceramic metal halide will notice an immediate difference in the quality and power of the light, the decrease in heat and the remarkable change that it makes to their merchandise.

Things to consider when choosing the type of lighting :

Track: This provides the most versatility as fixtures can be moved and repositioned with ease. If merchandise is moved from case to case or showcases are moved track lighting provides the store owner with the most options.

Recessed: This provides the sleekest look. The limitations are that the store owner will be limited in their ability to add or decrease light as well as limitations with moving merchandise and showcases around inside of the store. Once a recessed light is installed the cost to add or take away lighting becomes a large expense as electricians are required to remove/move lighting as well as the issues involved with repairing the holes in the ceiling where the recessed fixture was installed.

Pendants: Pendants are a great way to bring a light source closer to the showcases where the ceilings are high and the store owners do not want to spend the money required to add additional lights to compensate for high ceilings.

Inside of Showcase Lighting: Having lighting inside of a showcase can really add sparkle and glitter to your jewelry. The best lighting for inside a case is LED. Be careful though when choosing the LED to make sure that the color of the light is not blue (5500K = color range). Having one color shining on your merchandise inside the case and a different color shining on your merchandise above the case has the real potential to lose a sale. Stores do not want their customers to be attracted to how jewelry and diamonds looks inside only to have it look different on top of the glass where the sale is actually closed. Customers will think that stores are trying to trick them through the use of fancy lighting.

[For more information on Jewelry Store Lighting, visit <http://www.eco-lite.com/industries/jewelry/jewelry-store-lighting.htm>](http://www.eco-lite.com/industries/jewelry/jewelry-store-lighting.htm)

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