



Home Outdoor Lighting Assessment

Protecting the night starts at your front door.

Does your home protect the night?

Wherever you live, protecting the night starts at your front door. By following these four simple steps, you can reduce light pollution around your home and support a healthy nighttime environment for plants, animals, and people alike.

1 Learn about the need for quality lighting

Review the resources provided to better understand the impacts of light pollution and the need for quality lighting.

2 Assess your outdoor lighting

Using the provided checklist, assess the luminaires around your home and identify fixtures that need updating.

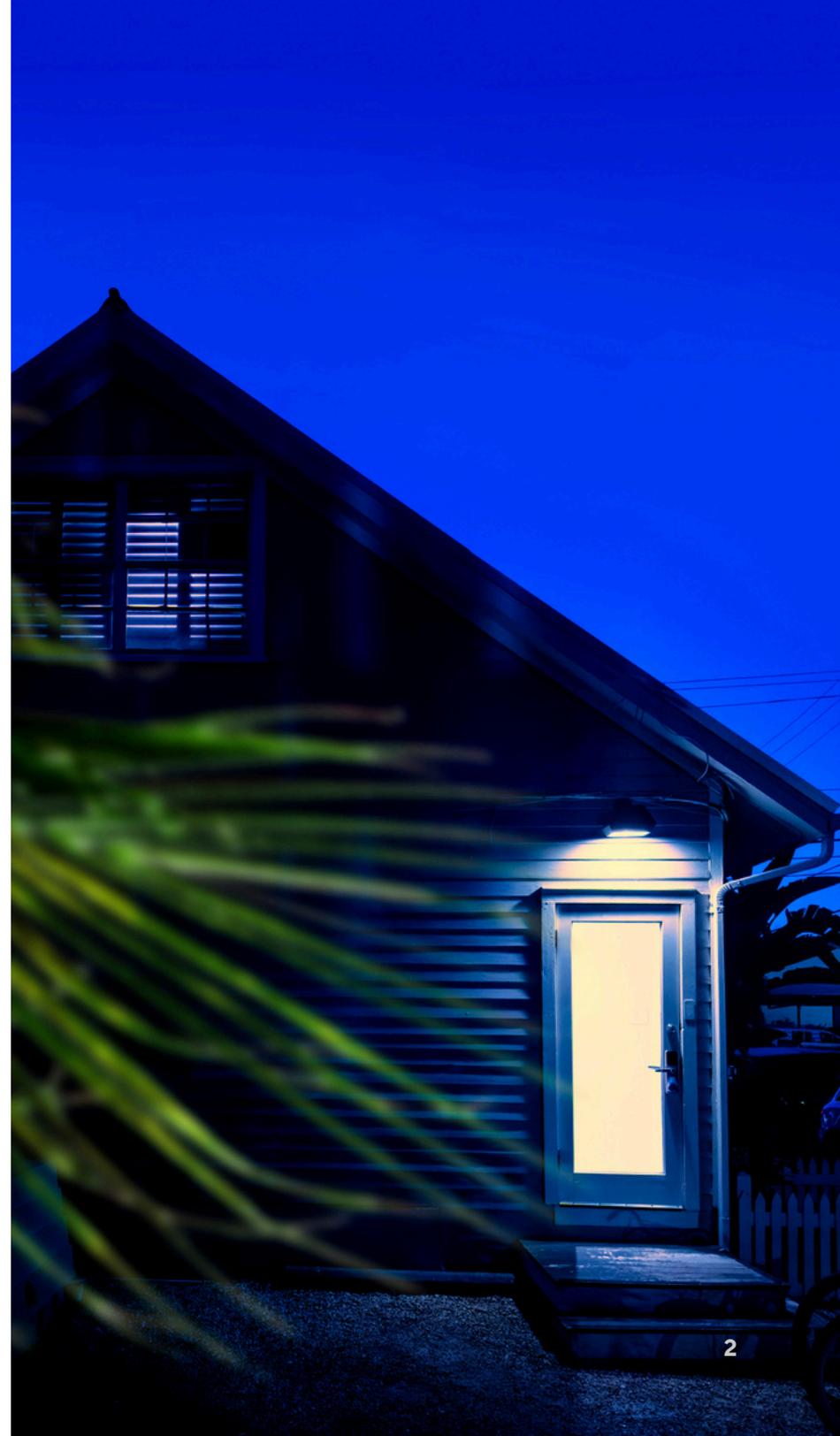
3 Replace or adjust outdoor light fixtures

Replace or adjust problematic light fixtures to comply with all Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night.

4 Confirm your assessment by signing the pledge

By submitting photos of your lighting and signing the pledge to protect the night, you self-certify your home as dark sky-friendly.

NOTE: We understand not everyone can modify the lighting around their home—especially if living in an apartment or rental unit. If possible, we encourage you to work with your property manager, use warm-colored, low-lumen bulbs, or turn off lights when not needed. This is self-certification activity centered on building positive awareness. Anyone engaging in meaningful action are welcome to participate.



A recent study found that light pollution is increasing by approximately 9.6% each year.

80% of the world's population lives under sky glow. In the U.S. and Europe, this increases to 99%.

What is light pollution?

Light pollution is the human-made alteration of outdoor light levels from those occurring naturally.

While light at night is essential in today's world, when we over-light, fail to use timers and sensors, or use the wrong color of light, we negatively affect the nighttime environment.



Skyglow

Skyglow is the dome of brightness on the horizon that obscures our view of the night sky.



Glare

Glare is when light enters our eyes at shallow angles, causing discomfort and restriction of the pupil, reducing visual acuity.



Light trespass

Light trespass is when light is falling outside of the property boundary onto another property or home.

The problem with bad lighting

Bad lighting at night not only disrupts the nighttime environment that plants, animals, and our communities depend on, it also reduces safety. [Learn more about light pollution \(link\).](#)



Overly bright light at night and glare from unshielded luminaires create harsh contrast, impairing our vision, making it harder to see steps, or potential threats lurking in shadows.



Exposure to light at night can suppress the body's production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates our sleep-wake cycle, metabolism, and immune system.



Artificial lights can cause migrating birds to wander off course towards dangerous nighttime landscapes and cities. Millions of birds die colliding with needlessly illuminated buildings and homes every year.



Light pollution disrupts moths and other pollinators essential to healthy habitats and gardens, altering their behavior and contributing to population declines.

We're only beginning to grasp the impact of artificial light on habitats, with new research continually revealing more affected wildlife, including:

- Hummingbirds
- Wallabies
- Little penguins
- Bees
- Zebra fish
- Songbirds
- Peahens
- Bats
- Owls
- Mice
- Seabirds
- Monarchs
- Atlantic salmon
- Zooplankton
- European perch



- Insects
- Geckos
- Fireflies

The importance of quality lighting at night

The key to protecting the night is quality lighting. Lighting that follows the Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night ensures it's used only when and where it's needed, and in ways that reduce light pollution and its harmful effects on the world around us.

The Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night



Useful

All light should have a clear purpose. Use lighting only when and where it is needed.



Targeted

Shield and aim your light so it only falls downward and where it is useful.



Low-level

Light should be no brighter than necessary to save money and reduce glare.



Controlled

Lighting should only be on when needed. Use timers and motion sensors.



Warm-colored

Warm-colored light causes less skyglow. Use amber-toned lighting when possible.

Photo credit: Lampas / Jacob Due

Home outdoor lighting assessment

Assess the outdoor lighting on your property. Give each luminaire a score and record what actions are needed to improve them.

-  1. Useful
-  2. Targeted
-  3. Low-level
-  4. Controlled
-  5. Warm-colored

Fixture name <i>Exp. front porch</i>	Principles checklist <i>What principles are met?</i>	Action needed <i>What needs to be fixed?</i>	Date of assessment
Back Porch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	Light spills into neighbors yard. Light needs shield and timer.	1/25
1.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
4.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
5.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
6.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		
7.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5		

Replace or adjust luminaires

Now that you've identified the luminaires that need updating, it's time to replace or adjust them to ensure each outdoor fixture complies with all five principles. Before you get started, first ask if the light is necessary. If it is not, consider removing the light altogether. Here are some additional tips...

Selecting adequate shielding

A quality luminaire does not allow light to spill into the sky. Choose a fully shielded fixture that directs light downward, no higher than 80 degrees from the nadir.

Choosing the right lumen level

Think about how much light you really need. For work areas like outside a garage, 300 to 800 lumens is usually enough. For pathways, 300 lumens or less will do the trick. Whatever the task, aim to keep the total lumen output below 1,000.

Using timers and sensors

Even if a luminaire is located where light at night is needed, we highly recommend placing it on a timer or motion sensor to ensure it is only on when needed. This has the added benefit of saving money.

Opting for warmer CCT's

When choosing a luminaire or bulb for an outdoor fixture, select one with a warm or amber-toned correlated color temperature (CCT). We recommend 2700K or lower for the most night-friendly lighting.

If you must use bulbs with a higher CCT (such as 3000K), make sure they're well shielded, used only when needed (with motion sensors or timers), and aimed carefully to avoid light spill.



No uplight!

Fully shielded
(80° from nadir)

Nadir

Warm Correlated Color
Temperature (CCT)

✓ 2700 K

✓ 3000 K

✗ 4000 K

✗ 5000 K

✗ 6000 K



Recommendations for renters

We understand that there are some lights in your life that you may not be able to control. If you are renting, you may not be able to replace or adjust fixtures, however there are still measure you can take to protect the night. Here's what we recommend...

Be mindful about when you use outdoor light

While you may not be able to change the fixtures around your home, focus on what you can control. Swap out bulbs for ones with lower lumens and a warmer color temperature, or set reminders to turn off porch lights before bed.

Have a conversation with your property manager

Start a conversation with your landlord or property manager about how quality outdoor lighting can improve safety and create a more welcoming environment. Talk with your neighbors and consider working together to advocate for positive changes.

Reach out to local officials

If you can't adjust your lights at home, think about advocating for change at a higher level. Call on your local representatives to implement dark sky friendly lighting ordinances in your area, and use DarkSky resources to inform change.

Join the movement

Connecting with other DarkSky Advocates in your town or community is a great way to remain engaged in the mission and drive progress forward. It takes continued public awareness of the issues, ongoing policy conversations, and engagement with partners to keep our skies safe.



Can't change the fixture?
Be consistent about switching
it off when it's not in use.

Search DarkSky Approved products

Need help finding a light fixture that's guaranteed to protect the night? Look for luminaires labeled DarkSky Approved! These products are officially certified by DarkSky International. Be on the lookout when shopping in retail stores or [browse our online portal of approved products](#).



New program logo



Old program logo

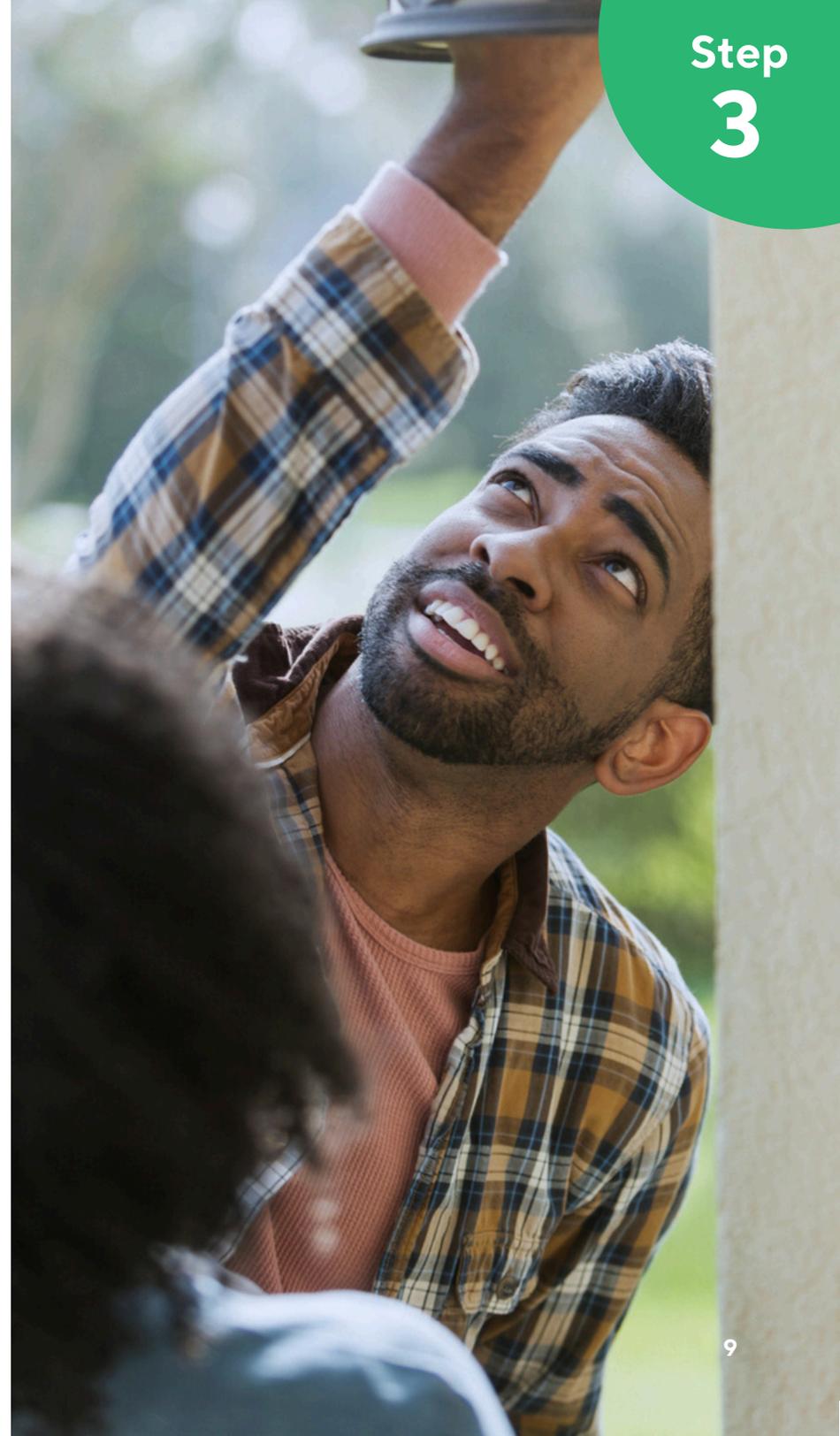
Program categories



Look for DarkSky Approved luminaires designed specifically for residential use. Each fixture meets our strict standards—it's a logo you can trust.



Do you live in a coastal area where sea turtles nest? If so, check out our special category of lighting specifically designed to be sea turtle-sensitive.



Confirm your assessment and sign the pledge

Once you've replaced or adjusted any problematic lighting, complete a final assessment to ensure each fixture meets all Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night—then finish the last two activities.

Submit photos of your lighting! (optional)

We want to see your hard work! We're always looking for great lighting examples to share with others. Use the link below (or on the activity webpage) to submit your photos—extra credit if they're taken at night!

[Submit lighting photos](#)

Sign the pledge to protect the night!

Now it's time to sign the pledge! This is the final step in this self-certification activity. By signing, you confirm that the outdoor lighting around your home is dark sky-friendly and pledge to continue protecting the night.

More information about ways to showcase your achievement can be found on the activity webpage!

[Sign the pledge](#)



Thank you for your commitment to protecting the night.

We're thrilled you took the time to assess the lighting around your home. Keep the momentum going by spreading awareness and exploring ways to bring quality lighting to your community. Thank you for being part of the global movement to protect the night!

Our mission

DarkSky International restores the nighttime environment and protects communities from the harmful effects of light pollution through outreach, advocacy, and conservation. [Learn more](#)

Get involved

There are many ways to take action—from becoming an official DarkSky Advocate to simply signing up for our e-news updates. However you choose to get involved, you'll be joining a growing global movement to protect the night. [Learn more](#)

Become a partner

Our impact is amplified through collaboration with organizational partners around the world. Learn how your organization can join our mission to preserve the nighttime environment. [Learn more](#)

Follow us

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