

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOR ABOUT THEIR “BAD” LIGHT

If your neighbor has lighting that intrudes on the privacy and enjoyment of your property at night, it is very likely that they are not aware that it is bothering you. If you are acquainted with them, you might ask them to come over to see the nature of the problem.

Since it is not difficult to re-aim or change the wattage of a light bulb, it is entirely possible for your neighbor to accommodate your concerns without much effort or expense. It is always best to have a solution to offer before making any complaint, in order to assure a successful outcome.

You may first want to stand on your own property line and look back toward your house to be sure that your lights are not offensive to your neighbors. Check with the local building inspector to see which local laws pertain to night lighting. It is helpful to know, prior to speaking to your neighbor, that “the law is on your side”.

Most porch lights will adequately illuminate a doorway in a suburban or rural neighborhood with a 40 watt incandescent (11 watt compact fluorescent) bulb. If a neighbor has a brighter unshielded porch light, it will produce a high level of glare, making it more difficult to see because the pupil will contract with that much brightness. “More” is not better in this case. TIP: If the socket of the porch light is above the bulb, an “R” type bulb will reduce glare and produce better light distribution on the ground. Consider giving your neighbor a new light bulb as an experiment to find what light level will be adequate and not offensive.

If your neighbor has the ubiquitous PAR type bare bulb floodlights in the double socket fixture, they can be aimed directly downward and still cover a large area with illumination since the light spread over 180 degrees. If they want to project light further outward to a distance of 4 times the mounting height, they could either shield the bulbs or replace the fixture with an energy conserving type, which will pay for the retrofit and provide better visibility. For the NEMA “Barn Blaster” type fixture, there are inexpensive retrofit shields. For good fixture choices and shields, see the website: <http://www.outdoorlgt.com/>

Refer, also, to the Dark Sky Society “Handouts” for good information to accompany your talk with your neighbor, including the [Diagrams of Acceptable Fixtures](#), to illustrate good choices. Learn about the issue yourself and give the message time to “sink in” before you ask your neighbor to make any changes, and you’ll have a good solution to a very common neighbor-to-neighbor problem.

If necessary, you may need to encourage your local municipal council to develop an ordinance in order to adequately provide protection from light trespass and glare for all the residents in your Town. First educate the council and all the local civic groups as to the importance of controlling light pollution, prior to recommending legislation.

See: The Dark Sky Society: www.darkskysociety.org