



Let there be light. Preferably flooding in through floaty voiles as you lie in bed on a spring morning. Plain white cotton and polyester duvet and pillowcase set, £15-£23, [sainsburys.co.uk](https://www.sainsburys.co.uk)

the [♥]comfort of things

NATURAL LIGHT

There are certain things in your home that are like old friends: they always cheer you up. We feel the love for rooms filled with sunlight and shadows

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

As summer approaches, rooms once dark and curtained are filled again with light. No more shutting out the world and switching on table lamps; now is the time to let natural light pour in. As cats know, stretching out in a patch of warm sunlight is one of life's most rewarding pleasures. And now is the time to do it.

As most of us spend close to 90% of our time indoors, it's important to maximise light in our homes and work places. (Apparently, most home buyers put 'light rooms' top of their list of requirements when

looking at property.)

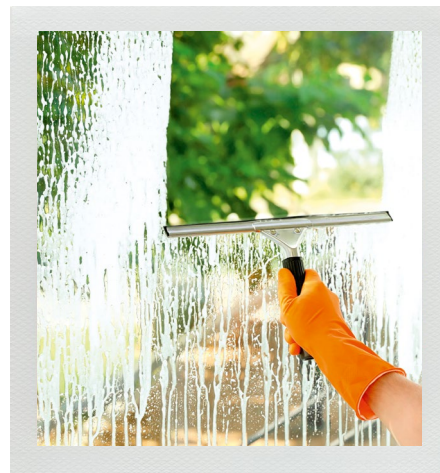
"Simply washing the windows can boost light significantly"

The most effective way to do this is to introduce more or bigger windows. French windows or bi-folding doors that open up an entire wall

can transform dark rooms at the back of the house. Light tubes can 'pipe' daylight into dark corners, and windows in roofs can transform dingy attic spaces into habitable rooms. At the other end of the scale, simply digging out the squeegee and washing the windows can boost light levels considerably, especially if you have neglected cleaning them over the winter months.

How you dress your windows is also key. Unless you run a stately home or have delusions of grandeur, it's best to avoid light-absorbing swagged curtains, valances and tie-backs layered with grubby nets. Blinds that snap tidily out of sight revealing the entire window are the smartest way to let the most light in. Wooden shutters offer privacy while throwing attractive striped shadows across the floor, and cobweb-light voile offers a breezy, modern alternative to net curtains.

Prune back any light-obstructing greenery outside, introduce a mirror or two to bounce the sun's rays around, and you're all set to embrace the expansive feelgood vibe that a light-filled house will bring. »



HOW TO CLEAN WINDOWS

Ways to make your panes sparkle

Vinegar versus soap and water

While white vinegar has been much touted as a good cleaner, it is best used for mould removal or as a disinfectant, as it isn't that great at shifting dirt. Better to fill a bucket with water and a generous splash of eco washing-up liquid, slop it on with an old cloth or sponge, then remove the water with a squeegee. OXO Good Grips stainless steel squeegee, £11.99, lakeland.co.uk

Microfibre cloth versus newspaper

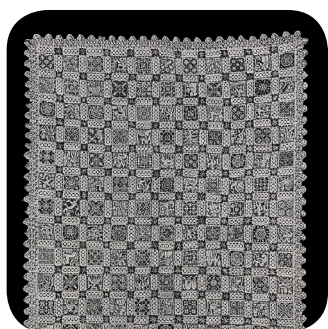
Scrunched-up balls of newspaper are the traditional way of buffing glass and a good way of removing streaks. Reusable microfibre cloths are absorbent and washable so can be used for swishing the water on to remove dirt and grease, as well as polishing it at the end. They are often sold in packs of two for this purpose. Ecloth, £4.50, waitrose.com. Clean & Gleam Glass Window Cleaning and Polishing Cloth, £5.99 for two, lakeland.co.uk

Window vacuum versus squeegee

Buying a handheld window vacuum may seem extravagant (they start at around £40), but it will repay itself in the joy it will bring. It works like a squeegee in that you slop water on the windows, then use it to scoop it off, but excess water is hoovered up so it doesn't pool on the floor/feet. Karcher window vac, from £39.99, johnlewis.com

THREE TO MAKE, BUY OR CUSTOMISE

The new generation of net curtains have shaken off their fusty image and nets can now be appreciated for what they are: pretty ways to filter the light and ensure privacy



1 Make
Dig around in charity shops, at jumble sales or in the back of your granny's cupboards for old lace tablecloths or pieces of antique lace. These can be cleverly repurposed as net curtains, especially on smaller windows in a kitchen or in a downstairs loo, where privacy is something of a must. Stitch several together for greater coverage. Loop on to a curtain pole with ribbons attached at regular intervals along the top edge of the fabric.



2 Buy
Voile is the modern version of the heavier, dust-gathering net curtains. The word is taken from the French for veil and, like a veil, its gauzy, semi-transparent nature lets light in while protecting your privacy. Made from sheer cotton or man-made fibre, it also blows around attractively in a breeze. Make your own or buy ready-made versions like the Basic Plain Slot Top Voile Panel, £4-£8, johnlewis.com, above, which can be slid on to a curtain pole.



3 Customise
Window film is a neat alternative to curtains and comes in a variety of patterns and designs to suit your taste and interior. Cut to your specifications, it is easy to install and, once in place, will suffuse the window with soft haziness, while allowing 90% of light in. PurIfrost.com, above, has frosted and decorative window film, from £17 per sq metre, which allows 90% of light in. Also try windowfilm.co.uk, which sells a range of designs by Mini Moderns.



Your modesty will be preserved with a bottom-up blind from blinds-2go.co.uk

HOME QUANDARIES

The bathroom window in our flat is lovely, in that it lets in plenty of light, but visitors (particularly my mother-in-law) have complained that they feel 'on view' when they use it. It has never bothered me, but I feel I should respect others' requests for privacy. Is there an unobstrusive and elegant way to protect my mother-in-law's modesty?

Answer in brief: a bottom-up blind will shield and illuminate.

A bathroom with a window is indeed a thing to treasure. So many urban flat conversions sacrifice a window in the name of space management. Fortunately, there is a compromise that will enable you to allow light in and respect your guests' privacy. Bottom-up blinds, as their name suggests, roll up from the bottom, allowing you to shield occupants from peeping neighbours while allowing daylight to flood in at a safe height above. A neat way to dress a bathroom window and to address your mother-in-law's concerns. **S**