

Proper light is critical for success with houseplants. You can compensate for incorrect watering or feeding, but there's little you can do about poor lighting. If it needs more than you have available, pass it up until you can provide it with the necessary light through grow-lights or additional windows.

You often see terms like "bright sunlight," or "bright, indirect light," or "medium light." Direct sunlight means just that: sun shining directly through a window, often from the south. This light is too strong for most plants, except cactus and other succulents. You can filter the light with a sheer curtain or drapery for more sensitive plants.

Bright light is less intense than direct sunlight. Plants should be placed in a southeast, southwest, or west exposure or a few feet away from a south window. Croton, schefflera, and coleus are a few of the plants that need this kind of light.

Bright, indirect light is reflected light--usually from white walls. The intensity of this light is roughly equivalent to east or west sun, or south sun filtered with a sheer curtain. This is the kind of light most foliage plants need.

Medium light is light strong enough to read by. A northern exposure gives medium light. It's roughly equivalent to light a few feet away from an east or west window. Most ferns and a few foliage plants require this kind of light. Few houseplants can survive in light that's not strong enough to read by. Regardless of its light requirements, turn the plant occasionally so it doesn't lean toward the light.