# Understanding Lighting

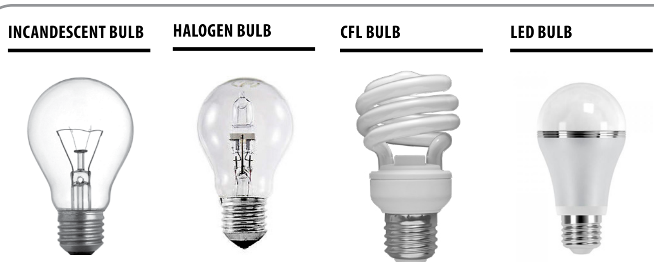
## Lighting

Legislation under the Energy Independence and Security Act put restrictions on how much energy light bulbs use. Traditional bulbs, called **incandescent** bulbs, have been replaced by more efficient bulbs like **halogens**, **compact fluorescents**, and **light emitting diodes** (LEDs) on store shelves.

Lighting accounts for nine percent of a school's energy use, which translates to about 17% of the school's electricity bill. Much of this can be the result of using inefficient lighting, while some can be attributed to wasteful lighting behaviors. Some schools may still use incandescent lighting in various lamps and fixtures in small spaces. Incandescent lighting is very inefficient, in that only 10 percent of the energy consumed actually produces light. The rest is given off as heat. There are other more efficient lighting choices on the market, including halogens, fluorescents, and LEDs. Halogens are sometimes called energy-saving incandescent bulbs because they last slightly longer, and use less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs, however they can burn hotter than incandescent lights do. Fluorescent lights produce very little heat and are even more efficient. Most schools use fluorescent tube lighting throughout the building, but may use incandescent bulbs in other spaces around the school.

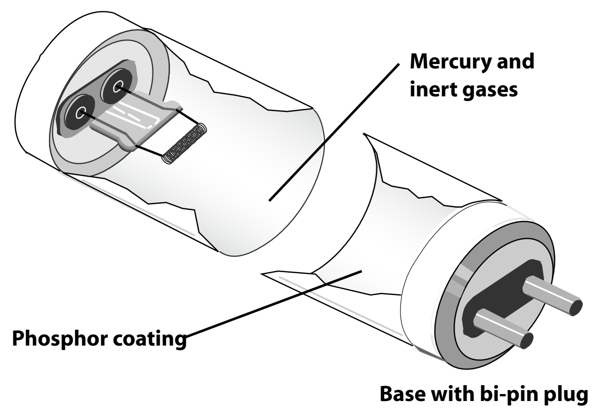
A fluorescent lamp is a glass tube, whose inner surface has a powdered, phosphor coating. The tube is filled with argon gas and a small amount of mercury vapor. At the ends of the tubes are electrodes that emit electrons when heated by an electric current. When electrons strike the mercury vapor, the mercury atoms emit rays of ultraviolet (UV) light. When these invisible UV rays strike the phosphor coating, the phosphor atoms emit visible light. The conversion of one type of light into another is called fluorescence.

Fluorescent lights have ballasts that help move the electricity through the gas inside the bulb. Ballasts are electromagnets that produce a large voltage between the ends of the bulbs so the electricity will flow between them. There are two types of ballasts, magnetic and electronic. Magnetic ballasts produce a frequency of 60 Hertz (Hz), which means the light is flickering on and off 60 times a second. Electronic ballasts produce a frequency of at least 20,000 Hz. Fluorescent lights with electronic ballasts are more energy efficient than those with magnetic ballasts.




LEDs offer better light quality than incandescent bulbs and halogens, last 25 times as long, and use even less energy than CFLs. LEDs now have a wide array of uses because technology has improved and costs have decreased. CFL use has greatly decreased as LED prices have come down to the similar price as other bulbs.

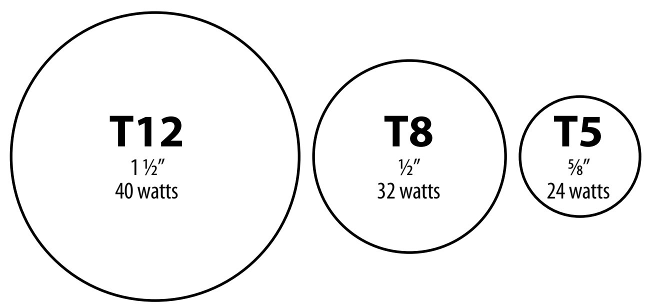
### Fluorescent Tube Lamp



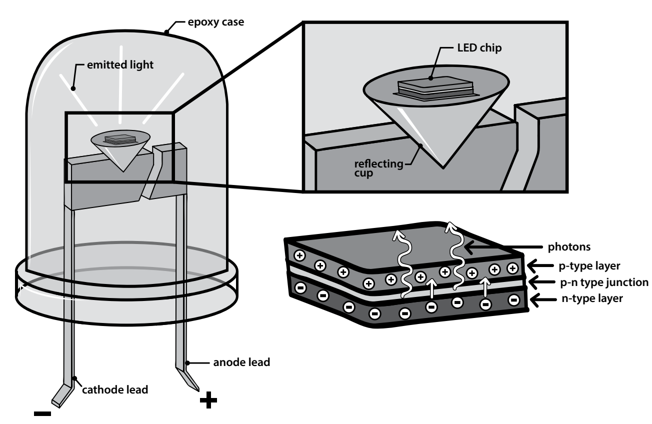

In fluorescent tubes, a very small amount of mercury mixes with inert gases to conduct the electric current. This allows the phosphor coating on the glass tube to emit light.

### Fluorescent Lighting Efficiency

**A T12 bulb consumes up to 40 watts of energy to produce a given amount of light. T8 and T5 bulbs use less energy to produce the same amount of light.**




### Inside an LED



Electronic ballasts use up to 30 percent less energy than magnetic ballasts. Electronic ballasts operate at a very high frequency that eliminates flickering and noise. Some electronic ballasts even allow you to operate the fluorescent lamp on a dimmer switch.

Although fluorescent tubes in ceiling fixtures are always more energy efficient than incandescents, there are new, even more efficient lamps that use better electrodes and coatings. They produce about the same amount of light with substantially lower wattage.

Most light fixtures in schools use four-foot long lamps, although three-foot lamps are common as well. Older fixtures often contain T12 lamps that are 11/2" in diameter and consume 34–40 watts. These lamps can be replaced with energy-saving T8 lamps that are 1" in diameter and typically consume 28–32 watts. Some newer systems are now using T5 lamps that are 5/8" in diameter and are even more efficient than the T8 lamps.

LEDs have been commonly found in electronic devices and exit signs. Now they are offered as affordable options for lighting in homes and businesses. Light emitting diodes contain **semiconductors** like solar panels; the difference is in the way the electrical energy is used by the LED. Three layers within the LED – p-type, n-type, and a **depletion zone** – combine to produce light. A minimum voltage is needed to energize electrons and they move from the n-type layer to the p-type layer. When the electrons move back again, they emit light that we see. The section of text called "How Light Emitting Diodes Work" below explains this process in more detail.

One of the quickest and easiest ways to immediately decrease a school electricity bill is to install CFL or LED bulbs in the place of incandescent or halogen bulbs in individual fixtures. For every 100-watt incandescent bulb replaced, a savings of $30-$80 can be realized over the lifetime of the bulb. A CFL uses 75 percent less energy than an incandescent, and an LED bulb uses even less energy. CFL and LED bulbs last longer than incandescent bulbs, too. Each type of bulb has benefits as well as drawbacks. For example, a CFL may be less expensive than an LED, but it is more fragile, contains mercury, and is not always dimmable. An LED is more durable than a CFL, but it is heavier and is sometimes more expensive. Both types are available in a wide variety of shapes and light colors. When shopping for a replacement bulb, look for ENERGY STAR® rated bulbs for the best quality and energy efficiency ratings, and make sure the bulb you buy produces the same brightness of light, as measured in lumens.

There are a few ways you can save energy on lighting in the school:

- switch incandescent bulbs to CFLs or LEDs;
- shut off lighting when exiting the room; and
- use natural light by opening blinds or curtains when possible.

## How Light Emitting Diodes Work

1. Diodes are made of semiconductors and conducting materials that need to be added to the semiconductor. In an LED the most common conductor added is aluminum-gallium-arsenide (AlGaAs). The AlGaAs is "doped" by adding small amounts of another material. One material will have more valence electrons than AlGaAs, and another doping material will have fewer electrons. The two doped materials are put together in a crystal. The material with more electrons is the "n-type" (n for negative) and the material with fewer electrons is the "p-type" (p for positive). When these materials are sandwiched together, the electrons move to balance themselves out. The area between the materials, called the p-n junction, is also called the "depletion zone."
2. Connecting a power source to the diode, such as a battery, provides electric current that carries electrical energy. The electrons in the n-type are repelled by the electric current, and move through the depletion zone to the p-type. They are energized, and will want to return to their original, unenergized state in the n-type.
3. When the electrons move back through the depletion zone to the n-type, they release energy as light. This is the light that we see from the LED. This process continues over and over again–electrons absorbing energy, moving, then moving back and releasing the energy, until the power supply is disconnected or depleted.
4. Connecting the power supply in the wrong orientation does not allow the LED to work. Instead, it merely increases the size of the depletion zone. Therefore, it is important that LED's be wired to their power supply in the correct orientation.

### How Light Emitting Diodes Work