

Kerosene Lamp: Making It Better!

Here are some tricky Tips for your kerosene lamps:

Brightness: If you looked at the Tip, "Kerosene Lamp Wick Gives Twice the Light!", you know how to get enough light from a kerosene lamp to read with it!

Still more light: A mirror behind your kerosene lamp will reflect the light that otherwise only lights up the wall. It won't be twice as bright, but almost.

Fuel Savings: Making more light means using more fuel. There's a way to cut fuel usage, too. Add a fuel stabilizer, "PRI-D," to your kerosene. Check the Tip, "Fuel Storage - or Not?" on where to get PRI-D.

Cooking: Deitz, a kerosene lantern manufacturer, makes a kerosene lantern with a small pot in which you can cook. Nice idea - but you can use a kerosene lamp to cook anyway. Take the chimney off the lamp. Make a stand that will hold your pot about 1 inch above the wick. Light the lamp, turn the flame very low, put the pan on the stand, and cook. Cooks call this "simmering," which means cooking takes a long, long, long time.

Humidifier: If you fit a small metal container to the top of your lamp chimney, with space underneath for the heated air to escape, you can add water to the metal container. It will boil and increase the humidity in the room. That's welcome on a cold winter day. Take care not to get any water on the lamp chimney. You'll crack it!

Heating: It should be obvious by now that the waste heat from a kerosene lamp can be useful. In a small room, a lamp can produce enough heat to raise the room temperature several degrees. Useful in winter. Don't try this in tents!

Electrical Power: A company in England makes a thermocouple that fits over the lamp chimney. Heat from the lamp produces enough electricity to run a small transistor radio. Far as I know, no one in the U.S.A. is making or selling these yet. The Russians pioneered this technology in the 1950s so people in communes without electricity could listen to Radio Moscow. The lamps weren't popular. Wonder why?

People killer: It should also be obvious that a kerosene lamp uses up oxygen in a house or tent. Old-time houses and tents weren't as airtight as those of today. I've never heard of anyone dying from asphyxiation from using a kerosene lamp. You wouldn't want to be the first, would you? Open a window a bit if you light a kerosene lamp. And did I tell you - don't ever try this in tents!