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Find Winter Light Changes in One Room

Four gentle weekly check-ins can help you see your room differently.



The patch of sun beside a favourite chair may shift long before you notice a change in a plant. Winter is a useful time to look again: not to chase the brightest corner every day, but to understand what your familiar room is doing.

Choose two fixed positions, make a few observations each week and keep the weather and curtains in the story. At the end, you will have a four-week location record and a reason to keep a plant where it is, consider another position or collect better evidence.

This is a blank observation workbook, not a completed experiment. Four weeks can reveal a local pattern; they cannot measure a whole winter's light or prove what caused every change. You do not need to buy a meter, install an app or put a plant in an unsuitable place to begin.

Snowy-window context, not a measured light record. Krista Vance / Pexels.

Winter can change the shape of light

Shorter days do not mean that every indoor position receives less direct sun. A lower winter sun can pass beneath an overhang or reach farther into a room, while another location may become shaded by a neighbouring building. Leaf loss on deciduous trees can change the view of the sky. The direction, size and surroundings of your window all matter. [1]

Use your local winter, not a fixed set of calendar months. The Northern and Southern Hemispheres have opposite seasons, and tropical or high-latitude conditions need local interpretation. Australian guidance describes substantial winter solar access through north-facing windows; that is a useful reminder not to turn one region's window rules into a worldwide rule. [2,6]

Around the local winter solstice, daylight may change only a little; after it, days begin to lengthen. A four-week record need not show a steady decline. [6]

Weather adds another layer. A cloudy check and a clear check do not isolate a seasonal change. Nor do a newly opened blind, a moved bookcase or a different observation time. Record those differences before deciding that the sun's seasonal path is responsible.

The aim is a useful placement decision, not a perfectly controlled study. If the four weeks are mixed or inconclusive, the honest result is “I need a better comparison.”



A different room and snowy view-not a time series or an endorsement of cold-window placement. Tanya Chukh / Pexels.

Set up two positions you can find again

Pick **A**, an existing or proposed leaf position, and **B**, a realistic alternative in the same room. Use stable, safely accessible places. You can observe empty positions; a plant does not need to sit there as a test subject.

Record each position's height and relationship to a fixed landmark: for example, the near edge of a table or a particular shelf upright. A pot moved a little farther back can receive a different pattern. Observe where the leaves would be, not only the tabletop or floor beneath them.

Sketch the window, both positions, main furniture and obvious obstructions. Note the normal curtain or blind setting. If you change a position later, give it a new label such as B2 and record the date; do not silently treat it as the original B.

My room setup

Room / town or region: _____

Local season / four-week date range: _____

Window direction, if known: _____

A: landmark, distance and leaf height: _____

B: landmark, distance and leaf height: _____

Normal curtains / screens / usual room lighting: _____

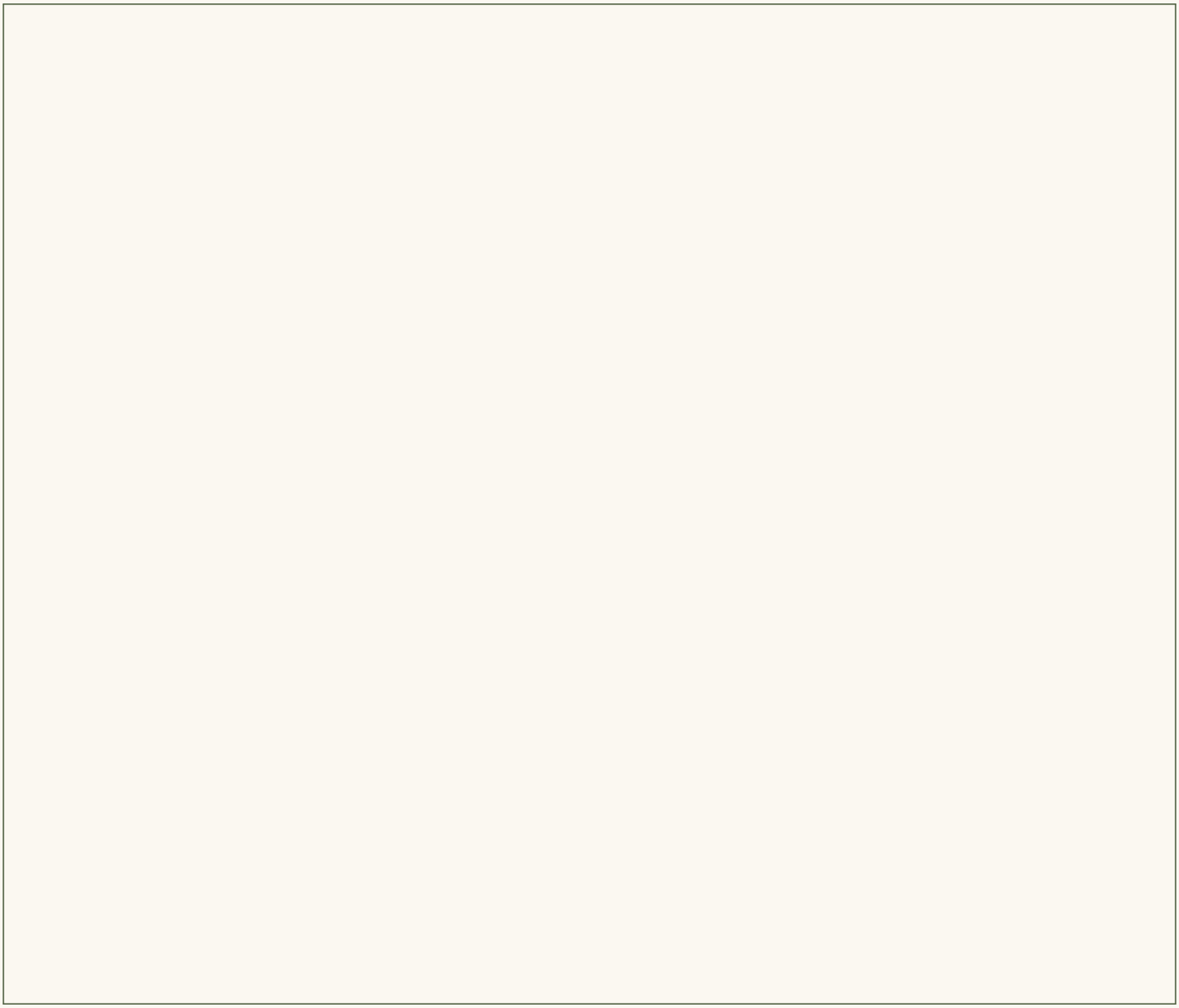
Fixed obstructions and possible seasonal changes: _____

Plant identity and its light needs, if already chosen: _____

Draw a simple room plan in the space provided. Mark A and B at their recorded heights, not as interchangeable corners. Keep any measurements in the same units.

Sketch your room

Mark the window, A and B, main furniture, covering positions and obstructions. Copy each leaf-height reference from your setup. This is your own blank plan, not a measured example.



Choose an easy observation rhythm

Plan **one observation day in each of four weeks**, with three checks spread across the part of the local day when daylight can reach the room. Choose times that fit your routine and the window, not a universal morning/noon/evening prescription. The second-day rows on each weekly page are optional: use them when a weather-matched comparison would help.

Write your planned three time windows before week one, then use the same windows as consistently as you can. Record the actual date and time at every check. If clocks change during the project, note the change and time-zone offset; a jump in clock time is not evidence of a seasonal jump in the sun's path. Do not compare such entries as equivalent without accounting for it. [5]

At each check, look at A and B close together in time. Record weather, the normal covering position and anything that changed. Look at the patches and shadows in the room, not at the sun. Do not climb, lean out of a window or reach over a heater for a better view.

Use these simple codes:

Code	What you actually observed	What it does not mean
S	A direct beam reaches the marked leaf position now	Not a measured intensity or a full-day sun duration
O	You checked and no direct beam reaches that position now	Not proof of adequate indirect light or of no sun at other times
?	You checked but cannot tell confidently	Not a negative observation; describe the uncertainty
M	You missed the check	Not zero light; leave the missing interval unknown

Add a short note such as “beam on floor only,” “daylight present,” “very dim to my eyes” or “after dark.” These are observations, not calibrated light categories. Do not use a phone photo's apparent brightness as a measurement; exposure settings can change the picture.

Planned check windows 1 / 2 / 3: _____

Usual time zone / offset and any clock-change note: _____

Read one row before filling your own

The following row is invented to show the notation. It is not a measurement, a recommendation for these times or a description of either photograph.

Date and actual time	Weather / coverings	A: code and note	B: code and note	Change or uncertainty
Example only: 10 January, 11:10 local	Clear; normal blind open	O; beam on floor in front, not at leaf height	S; beam reaches marked position	Start of beam unknown; no duration inferred

That row tells you B had direct sun at that moment and A did not. It does not tell you which position had more total plant-usable light over the day, whether B is suitable for your plant, or when the beam began.

If the next week's matching check is overcast, write what happened and flag the weather difference. An optional second day with more comparable conditions may help. Never replace the cloudy entry with the clearer one: both are part of the room's real conditions.

The four-week location tracking chart

Use the four weekly pages as one chart. Each has three planned-check rows and three optional comparison rows. Fill the actual date and time, not only “morning.” Record A and B separately; an empty cell is not a result.

At the end of each week, write one sentence about what you observed and one thing you still do not know. Keep plant-health notes separate from the light observations: leaf changes are not a light meter.

Week 1: establish the record

Record your baseline without trying to improve it halfway through. If a safety or plant-care concern needs immediate action, act and document the change rather than keeping a harmful arrangement for consistency.

Week dates / time zone: _____ A / B labels: _____

Date / actual time	Weather / covering	A: code + note	B: code + note	Change / gap
Planned 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Observed this week: _____

Still unknown: _____

Separate plant-health note, if relevant: _____

S = beam now · O = checked, no beam now · ? = uncertain · M = missed. Blank cells are not results.

Week 2: look for a fair comparison

Compare checks made at similar times with similar weather and coverings. Circle or note mismatches instead of averaging them away.

Week dates / time zone: _____ A / B labels: _____

Date / actual time	Weather / covering	A: code + note	B: code + note	Change / gap
Planned 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Observed this week: _____

Still unknown: _____

Separate plant-health note, if relevant: _____

S = beam now · O = checked, no beam now · ? = uncertain · M = missed. Blank cells are not results.

Week 3: check the explanation

If a beam appears or disappears, ask whether the position, time, coverings or obstruction changed. A repeated difference under comparable conditions is more informative than one unusual afternoon.

Week dates / time zone: _____ A / B labels: _____

Date / actual time	Weather / covering	A: code + note	B: code + note	Change / gap
Planned 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Observed this week: _____

Still unknown: _____

Separate plant-health note, if relevant: _____

S = beam now · O = checked, no beam now · ? = uncertain · M = missed. Blank cells are not results.

Week 4: choose the next step

Summarize the evidence you actually have. The record may support a practical change without proving a purely seasonal cause. Keep uncertainty visible.

Week dates / time zone: _____ A / B labels: _____

Date / actual time	Weather / covering	A: code + note	B: code + note	Change / gap
Planned 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Planned 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 1: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 2: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Optional 3: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Observed this week: _____

Still unknown: _____

Separate plant-health note, if relevant: _____

S = beam now · O = checked, no beam now · ? = uncertain · M = missed. Blank cells are not results.

Turn the record into a placement decision

Review matched checks across the four pages. Look for repeated changes at A or B, not a competition over which week has the most S codes. Three snapshots do not add up to total sun hours, and the longest observed beam is not automatically best for the plant.

Your four-week record suggests…	A useful next step	Keep this limit in mind
A new beam repeatedly reaches a formerly protected position	Check the plant's direct-sun tolerance; consider a protected alternative and observe it	Winter does not make every beam harmless
The usual location is repeatedly very dim or heavily blocked	Reassess a brighter, safe position or seek plant-specific light guidance	Visual dimness is a prompt to investigate, not a PPFD measurement
The pattern differs mainly with weather, curtains, timing or a moved object	Separate those entries and repeat a more comparable check	Do not label every difference “seasonal”
Checks are similar, sparse or inconclusive	Keep the record and revisit later or after a meaningful change	Four weeks with little visible change do not certify the rest of winter

My four-week conclusion

Repeated observation at A: _____

Repeated observation at B: _____

Entries I cannot compare fairly, and why: _____

What remains unknown: _____

Decision: keep / consider a new position / gather better evidence

Plant-specific guidance I will check before moving it: _____

Next observation trigger or date: _____

Keep the plant comfortable while you learn

Light is only part of a suitable winter position. Keep leaves away from freezing glass, cold drafts and hot air outlets. A bright sill behind closed curtains on a frosty night may be a poor place for a tender houseplant. Do not trade a light concern for a temperature or stability problem. [3,4]

Continue to check the potting mix and follow the plant's own care needs. Lower light can slow growth and water use, but room heat, pot size and other conditions also matter; “winter” is not a universal watering interval. Yellowing or leaf loss can have several causes. [3]

If you decide to move a plant, record the new position and reassess its exposure. Avoid a sudden move into strong direct sun simply because another spot looked brighter in a photograph. For a deteriorating plant, seek species-specific help rather than waiting for the workbook to end.

Your record is a small piece of knowledge about your own room. Keep it for a later seasonal comparison, but do not assume the same dates next year will bring identical weather or surroundings.

Sources

Primary sources checked 2 November 2026. The observation rhythm, codes, chart and example are original editorial tools. No four-week physical study, device measurement or plant-growth test was performed.

1. Australian Government, Your Home: Shading. Seasonal sun angles, overhangs and deciduous shading; regional design advice is not copied as a universal window rule. https://www.yourhome.gov.au/passive-design/shading

2. Australian Government, Your Home: Orientation. Winter solar access and local/seasonal context. https://www.yourhome.gov.au/passive-design/orientation

3. University of Minnesota Extension, Lighting for indoor plants and starting seeds. Plant light needs, slower growth/water use in lower light and limits of symptoms. https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/lighting-for-indoor-plants

4. Royal Horticultural Society, Jobs for January: Greenhouse, conservatory & houseplants. UK winter window/curtain caution, not a worldwide January calendar. https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/january/greenhouse,-conservatory-and-houseplants

5. NOAA Global Monitoring Laboratory, Solar Calculator Glossary. Clock adjustments and solar-time terminology only; not used for current local daylight-saving rules. https://gml.noaa.gov/grad/solcalc/glossary.html

6. U.S. Naval Observatory, The Seasons and the Earth's Orbit. Opposite hemispheres and solstice day-length extremes. https://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/seasons_orbit

Photograph credits

Cover: Krista Vance, “Cozy Winter View Through Frosted Window,” Pexels. Snow-covered branches beyond a window, warm wood and soft-focus plants in front. The source records an April 2020 capture; location and compass direction are unverified. Snowy-window context, not proof of the reader's winter conditions or a plant identification.
https://www.pexels.com/photo/cozy-winter-view-through-frosted-window-37165556/

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https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-houseplant-near-windows-5506816/

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