



Control Desks

A lighting desk is essentially a computer that sends a data signal to the lighting fixtures that you use. Commonly a DMX (Digital Multiplex) signal is sent from the lighting desk to the lights by assigning appropriate [DMX](#) addresses (To find out more please visit our [DMX Guide](#)), However in some cases a [DMX](#) signal is sent to Dimmer Packs to power the corresponding fixture correctly - this is usually the case with generic fixtures. Getting the right type of control system for your [LED, Movers](#) or [Generic Fixtures](#) is really the personal preference of the lighting operator or programmer - However, other factors such as cost, number of output universes, hardware and software come into consideration when hiring or purchasing a lighting desk.

There are many different brands of desks including [Avolites](#), [GrandMA](#), [Zero 88](#) and [ETC](#). All of these use [DMX](#) as a control interface and the number of [DMX](#) universes the desk can output is usually determined by the number of physical [DMX](#) connections on the back of the console but these can normally be extended with the use of networking protocols such as Artnet or Streaming Acn using the networking ports on the rear of the console - Most commonly Cat5/Ethernet connectors.. Consoles that are capable of controlling [Intelligent Fixtures](#) (with ease) typically start at around £2,000 (Such as [Zero 88 Jester ML24](#)), However these do not usually have a very user friendly interface - Ideally a school would be looking at these budget systems. Top range consoles such as [Avolites](#) flagship console, [The Sapphire Touch](#), Comes in just over £18,000 list price. This is purely because it uses motorized faders (allowing page changes to be quick so you can see where you see the fader levels of different pages) , Dual touchscreens with external displays supported (this can be helpful for quick programming through the uses of the desk's palette system). MA Lighting's Desks such as an [GrandMA2](#) can cost in excess of £40,000 - Typically these are hired in from audio-visual hire companies for big events such as The London 2012 Olympics (Though the main lighting desks used were [PRG's V676](#) desk, Tim Routledge (the LD) worked on Grand MA2 Full Sized. This indicates how even at the top it comes down to personal preference.)