



Tips Before You Hire An Interior Designer

Hiring an interior designer can be a full time job. So to make your life a tad bit easier we are providing you with a list of must do's before you hire a design professional for your next big project. Below is the top ten (10) things to look for when hiring an Interior Designer. *(compiled by Amanda Reid, fellow Interior Designer.)*

Point 1: *The First Step. The best ways to find interior designers for consideration are:*

- Whether it is in a design publication, in your city or a place that you've visited, find a space that speaks to you and find out who designed the interior.
- Ask friends, associates, or family who have worked with a designer for a recommendation. Their project doesn't necessarily have to match your taste and style exactly, but should reflect good design in that it was well planned and executed. A talented designer is able to design in many styles and may tailor designs to the client.
- The internet offers a convenient way to search for local designers but please use caution and check credentials as described below. There are many unqualified folks who market themselves as interior designers.

Point 2: *Check Credentials.*

Make sure that the person is an accredited interior designer. This ensures that you will work with a designer who has the education and experience required to practice professionally.

Point 3: *Portfolio Review.*

Once you have found some designers and checked their professional credentials, review their on-line [portfolio/website](#) more closely. Think about what you love and why. While it is natural to admire a particular style, realize that it is not the only factor. A good designer solves problems

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and addresses each client individually to provide tailored design solutions. Narrow it down to a few designers whose work speaks to you and contact them to discuss your project.

Point 4: *The Initial Meeting*

The initial meeting or design consultation serves multiple purposes: it allows for a face to face introduction between the designer and the client; gives the client the opportunity to ask the designer questions about their portfolio, experience and the design process; enables the designer to determine the scope of work and gather enough information about the project to prepare a proposal.

Point 5: *Ask Questions.*

The initial meeting is the time to 'interview' a designer about their work and experience. Here are some questions to ask:

- Have they completed a project similar in scale and scope to yours?
- What were their responsibilities on previous projects? Did they include: Conceive the Design Concept & Set Overall Design Direction, Design Development, Select Finishes & Materials, Select Furniture & Lighting, Construction Documentation, Construction Administration, Project Management.

- Can they provide all of the services required for your project and if not, which consultants may need to be retained (architect, engineer, lighting consultant, etc.)?

Most designers are very passionate about their work and will be happy to answer questions about their projects and experience. Use this time not only to gather information about the designers' experience but also to find out about their personalities.

Point 6: *It's Personal.*

Personal rapport is very important in a client-designer relationship. Typical projects last at least several months or longer, so it is beneficial to have a good personal connection. You will need to trust this person and feel comfortable. Ask yourself, are they good communicators and easy to talk to; do they understand your needs, wants, goals and budget?

Point 7: *Forget HGTV!*

Remember that real life design projects are very different from those depicted on television. A design is not conceived and completed in a few minutes at the drafting table, and a kitchen is not renovated in a weekend. Furniture lead times can vary from 3 weeks to 14 weeks. The design process and implementation requires time, planning and expertise to execute. A designer will be able to provide you with a realistic schedule and time line of the process.

Point 8: *Know your Budget.*

Have a project budget in mind. There are many different levels of design and a designer needs to know the amount of money you have allotted for the project in order to propose design solutions that will fit your needs. For example, there are sofas available for US \$1,500 and US \$15,000. If you are unsure about how much is realistic for your scope and goals, ask the designer to help you determine an appropriate budget.

Point 9: *The Proposal & Design Fee.*

After the initial meeting, the designer will submit a proposal which should outline the scope of work, the services to be provided, a preliminary schedule, the design fee and billing schedule. Carefully review the proposal and confirm that the scope of work is correct and complete. If you are dealing with a firm as opposed to an individual designer, make sure it is understood and stated who will be responsible for your project. If there is a team, you may request to meet the team members. Once

the project commences, make sure that all changes to the project scope are documented in writing.

Interior designers charge in various ways with the 3 most common being: an hourly rate, a fixed fee, or a combination of hourly rate or fixed fee plus commission (on goods including furniture, lighting, etc.). All are accepted practices and one is not necessarily superior to others. Their fee structure may vary depending on the project. There is no hard and fast rule and fees vary enormously depending on many factors including project location and scope as well as the experience and talent of the designer. The best advice I can offer is to make sure that the fee structure is clearly identified and agreed upon in advance.

Point 10: *Check References.*

I encourage you to check references as another indicator. At PETER E DESIGNS we are always happy to provide a list of previous clients for potential clients to contact. When you call, ask about the overall experience with the designer: What was the scope of the project? Was it completed on time and within the budget? If not, what was the reason? Are they happy with the design and end result? Was the designer creative, responsive and resourceful? Would they hire the designer again and recommend them to their family and friends? It's also worth asking if they have any tips or advice about the design or construction process that they would share.



Moni A. Rehoboth Beach - Guest Bath

Peter E.