

Consumer Pre-Design Consultation Checklist

Before you ever speak to a designer, take some time to think about what you want, what you need, what you can afford, and what is most important to you. The designer you hire will be able to advise you on specifics, but to get the result you want, it is important to do your homework first. The time you spend will be well worth it.

Start by answering the following questions as completely and specifically as you can:

What Do You Want to Create or Change?

- Who is going to use the space?
- What activities will take place there?
- How long do you plan to occupy the space?
- What kind of look or feel do you want the space to have?
- If you are modifying an existing space, what do you currently like about the space? What do you most want to change? Why?

How Much Time and Money Do You Want to Devote to Your Project?

- What is your timeframe for completing your design project? Is there a date or impending event by which your project must be finished?
- Will you or someone you delegate be on hand while the work is being done?
- What is your budget? What changes do you need to have and which would be nice to have?
- How will you finance the project?

What Do You Want the Interior Designer to Do?

- Improve the use and efficiency of space, including storage and organization?
- Create or reproduce a "look" or style?
- Recommend and/or select fixtures, furnishings, accessories, appliances, etc.?
- Improve or enhance the lighting?
- Improve the acoustics and/or minimize sound transmission?
- Increase the accessibility and safety of the surroundings?
- Address health and environmental issues?
- Address special needs?
- Suggest "green" solutions and products?
- Integrate audiovisual, security and/or other technology into the design?
- Recommend contractors and manage the project?

Once you have determined the scope of your project, spend some time considering the "look" and options you want.

Putting together an idea folder or scrapbook of your likes and dislikes, wishes and dreams is a great way to begin the design process. Look for pictures of rooms or styles that appeal to you, swatches of fabric, paint color cards, furniture catalogs or brochures, etc. These will stir your imagination and help the designer better understand your preferences and tastes. Include information and pictures of appliances, plumbing fixtures, lighting fixtures, cabinet and door hardware, and flooring materials as well, if these will be elements in your project.

Finally, consider how much you want to be involved in your project? Do you want a designer who will work with you, or do you want the designer to take charge and provide you with options? Clarifying your expectations will help you and the designer to communicate well and ensure the result you want.

When you hire an interior designer, you get the benefit of an experienced professional who can solve problems, help you avoid costly mistakes and, most importantly, create a space designed specifically to meet your needs. To find out how to locate a qualified interior designer in your community, check out ASID's free Designer Referral Service.