



Interior Design 101: Tips And Tricks Everyone Should Know

Secrets from expert insiders that will help you take your home to the next level.

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Designing the inside of your home can be a daunting task. What colors are you going to focus on? Are you hiring a designer? How do you find the perfect designer to tailor your needs? Are you having an anxiety attack yet? Deep breaths. We sat down with a few interior designers who gave us some insight: all the secrets you need to know when designing your home.

This process can be a fun chapter in your life! Take it from the pro's: don't do it alone. Hire a designer to help you along. But where should you start? We spoke with designer Kristin Taghon of [Kristin Taghon Interior Design LLC](#). She's been in the business for nearly eight years and opened her own firm in Chicago a few years ago. Taghon says when searching for your perfect designer, ask that friend who has similar taste.

“We surround ourselves with friends who are like-minded for the most part and it’s important that the designer and client click. Clients should ask friends, relatives and co-workers for referrals and find out why they liked their designer and details of the

projects. Look at the designer’s website to see if you like some of the things he/she does. It’s important to remember that the designer is working for the client and the style may change for each project. You might check Yelp and Houzz.com for reviews on the designer as well. Be discerning about the reviews and determine if the complaints/compliments reveal characteristics that are important to you,” Taghon said.

If you elect to do the job on your own, make sure you have the time to do the footwork. Designers we talked to say if you aren’t that person, find someone you trust to be an advocate for you. Once you find a good match, come to the table prepared with pictures of areas you like. Check Pinterest, Houzz.com, magazines, online or print. Taghon says it’s important to ask yourself the following questions prior to meeting with designers.

“What frustrates you in your space? What makes you happy? When you’re out and about, be aware of functionality and beauty that you like and try to jot down those ideas for your meeting with the designer. Pay attention to the details of the Letter of Agreement or contract. Ensure that you know what the process is. Work with the designer to ensure the contract includes all your line items. And finally, Budget. Try to determine how much money you are willing to spend on this project. If you can relay this to the potential designer, he/she can let you know if it’s realistic and what you can do with your budget,” Taghon said.

The dreaded B-word: budget. When you’re creating a budget with a designer, you should keep functionality in mind. Who is using this space and what is important to them? Taghon says to prioritize projects and don’t cut corners. Are you willing to live with the cheaper version and the possibility of breakage or failure? Designers say cutting corners can actually add cost.

“I had a client that tried to cut corners, disregarding my objections. They didn’t get the building permits from the city. They tried to order the products themselves. In the end, when they got caught by the city, the project was stalled; the inspectors made the contractor break into walls even if they hadn’t touched them! Labor costs went up.

When wrong products were ordered, the clients were the ones who had to pay

restocking fees or return freight or eat the full cost of the items. Trust your contractor and designer! You can always do projects in phases if you can't do everything at once," Taghon said.

Chicago Interior Designer Rae Duncan of [Rae Duncan Interior Design](#) says it's important to keep a flexible schedule and plan in mind. Don't feel discouraged if your master bedroom isn't done by the holidays.

"Deliveries and construction can sometimes be pushed back unexpectedly. There are a million things that can go wrong that you just can't plan for. You have to go into the process completely aware," Duncan said.

When you sign on with a designer, create a vision board of what look you're shooting for. The designer will use that to create two to three choices to choose from based on what they hear from you and your preferences. Taghon says it's important to stick with functional trends that will add resale value. Stick to open concept spaces and be open to removing or moving walls. Designers we talked to say good lighting is extremely important for those staying in their homes longer and growing with their space.

All in all, communication is key. Your designer should spell out the process by which they work so you know what is expected of them and what is expected of the designer. Taghon says you have to find the sweet spot of trusting your designer, but also letting them do their job.

"Interior design is not only about making a space pretty. It is also about helping our clients lead healthy and productive lives. We know that there are standards for creating functional spaces. We can help the client determine their needs and their goals and make it a reality. Find a designer that wants to be your advocate, is excited to work with something new and can introduce you to new ideas that can make your life better. And prettier!"