

Questions to Ask Your Architect

Are you ready to hire an architect? Learn what questions will inform your search for a design partner.

Asking the right questions before hiring an architect for your dream home project is essential for avoiding headaches down the road. You want to select an architect who makes you feel comfortable and understands your goals, and one whose work style aligns with how you plan to proceed.



RYAN SIEMERS

- **What are the biggest design challenges and considerations of my project?**

The architect will likely have insights or knowledge beyond what you have explored. They should have ideas for how to rise to those challenges and embrace all project considerations.

- **How much time for feedback do I need to commit?** Do you want to be involved in the tiniest details, or do you plan to be relatively hands-off? How does this fit in with the architect's timeline and workflow? Being honest up front about what kind of client you are in this regard—which includes when you're best able to meet and how—and learning what the architect expects from you will keep things running smoothly. This conversation will also aid in setting a timeline and budget for the project overall.

- **What will you show me along the way to explain the project?** Can you expect renderings or drawings before the construction process starts? Don't be afraid to ask for sketches or alternative designs, samples, or showroom visits. Ask about the impact modifications or alternatives will do to both the budget and timeline.

- **Who is on my team?** Unless you choose a solo practitioner, there are many people at an architecture firm who will contribute to your project. Who will you be dealing with directly? Is it the same person who is designing your project? Ask for introductions!

- **How will you handle the unexpected?** The years of the pandemic have created challenges with the supply chain, as well as staffing and connecting with clients. Your architect should be able to tell you how they have adapted their workstyle, and how they deal with the unexpected in any project.

- **Do you have references?** Speaking to an architect's references, typically past clients and contractor partners, will not just reassure you that you've found a reputable architect, but will also give insight into their work style and approach.



BRANDON STENGEL

- **What's your fee structure, and what sort of costs can I expect?** Make sure your architect is open with you about any additional costs that may accrue outside of the contract. You may also learn more about your architect's track record regarding cost estimating and completing projects within budget by talking to their references.
- **What's your relationship with the contractor?** Does the architect have a contractor they partner with regularly? If not, will they help you identify the right contractor for your project? Will you be expected to deal with the contractor directly, or will the architect work with them?

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