

Emma Blomfield

Hiring A Decorator Checklist:

Hiring a stranger to enter your most sacred space can be quite daunting, opening up your home to be analysed and assessed from every inch takes guts. But it's all well worth it in the long run when you open the front door and take a deep breath in and smile as you look around your beautiful home.

Ultimately you are hiring a decorator to help you solve problems that you have tried solving, don't have time to solve or haven't had the money to solve on a budget. They have years of knowledge in terms of suppliers, colour trends, fabric and paint resources, trades people and decorating problem solving. You are paying them to skip mistakes you would have made on your own, like potentially disastrous furniture purchases, incorrect paint colour choices and more. It's your choice as to how much involvement you want the decorator to have, you might want someone to oversee the entire project or you might just want a sounding board to discuss tile choices, paint colours or sofa fabrics with (that aren't your friends, often their opinions are very strong but tend to be skewed to their own style not yours.)

Decorators are not only great at pulling a room together but they also act like a psychologist in a way, they get to know all sorts of things about you and your family and help identify problems in your home that need fixing (well, they aren't going to offer marriage counseling advice but I know sometimes it has felt that way to me when a husband and wife disagree on colours!).

There are a couple of things to do prior to inviting a decorator over... A little bit of planning goes a long way, both for you and for the decorator. If you've done your homework before the decorator turns up he/she will be very thankful for the additional information you are able to provide for them. Here's a little guide to preparing for a visit from a decorator:

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1. Do Your Research

Has the decorator got a portfolio full of images of their work? Any decorator worth their salt will have an extensive collection of beautiful images from projects they have completed. This will give you insight into the decorators style and design tastes. If the images in their portfolio aren't to your taste, this isn't the decorator for you. Each decorator tends to have a few styles they specialise in so trying to force a different style out of them to suit your tastes can result in miscommunication or worse, a house full of furniture you don't actually like.

Take a look at their social media pages, often their websites are reserved for the stunning, styled photos but a peek into their lives, behind the scenes on projects and any other interesting things they come across in their field of work are usually only shared on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest or Twitter.

If the decorator doesn't have any images displayed of their work on their website, this should be a major warning sign not to bother speaking to them.

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2. Ask Questions

If you've done your research into the decorators style, you like the sound of the services they offer and they've communicated the process of working with them clearly you shouldn't have too many questions left to ask but a few helpful ones are:

Asking about their previous experience:

Sometimes the images on decorators website aren't a full and accurate reflection of their skill set - we don't always get the opportunity to photograph all of our work, sometimes client's budgets restrict the project from finishing on time or the home gets sold before you've been able to photograph it. Or sometimes, they are structural changes that aren't particularly pretty so don't even get photographed at all.

Ask about their billing process:

Each decorator will bill you differently. Most will expect some sort of deposit on the quoted amount of hours before they will commence work. Others work on a retainer and some bill you in one go at the end of a project. It's important to know all this information upfront so you aren't left with huge bills to pay at the end of a project that you haven't budgeted for.

Ask what happens if you aren't 100% happy with their designs:

Once you've met with the decorator you will know if they are the right fit for the project but it's important to be clear on their terms and conditions. Most decorators offer one round of changes to their initial designs free of charge. After that they will charge you by the hour. If you really feel that they haven't selected anything to your taste at all then you need to have a discussion immediately to diffuse any potential issues.

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3. Do Your Own Homework

What exactly do you need help with? Are you able to clearly identify your own style or do you need to work with the decorator to figure this out?

It's often helpful to search websites (such as Pinterest or interior design blogs) and pick out some of your favourite styles. Keep these images on file for when you meet with your decorator. This will help them significantly and skips quite a few steps in the decorating process.

It's also really important to make sure you are aware of the budget you have available to dedicate to the project. If you go into the decorating process blindly you'll find yourself in big trouble financially if you haven't been realistic with the funds you have available. This also helps the decorator to figure out what to prioritise in the process too.

If you've never hired a decorator before and you've watched all those Hollywood movies, you may have some sort of stereotype in your mind about what decorators are like and what they do. They don't sweep into a room and tell you your home looks hideous, a good decorator will help you work with what you've got and they never judge your personal style, everyone is different in their approach to decorating and that's half the fun of being a decorator.

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