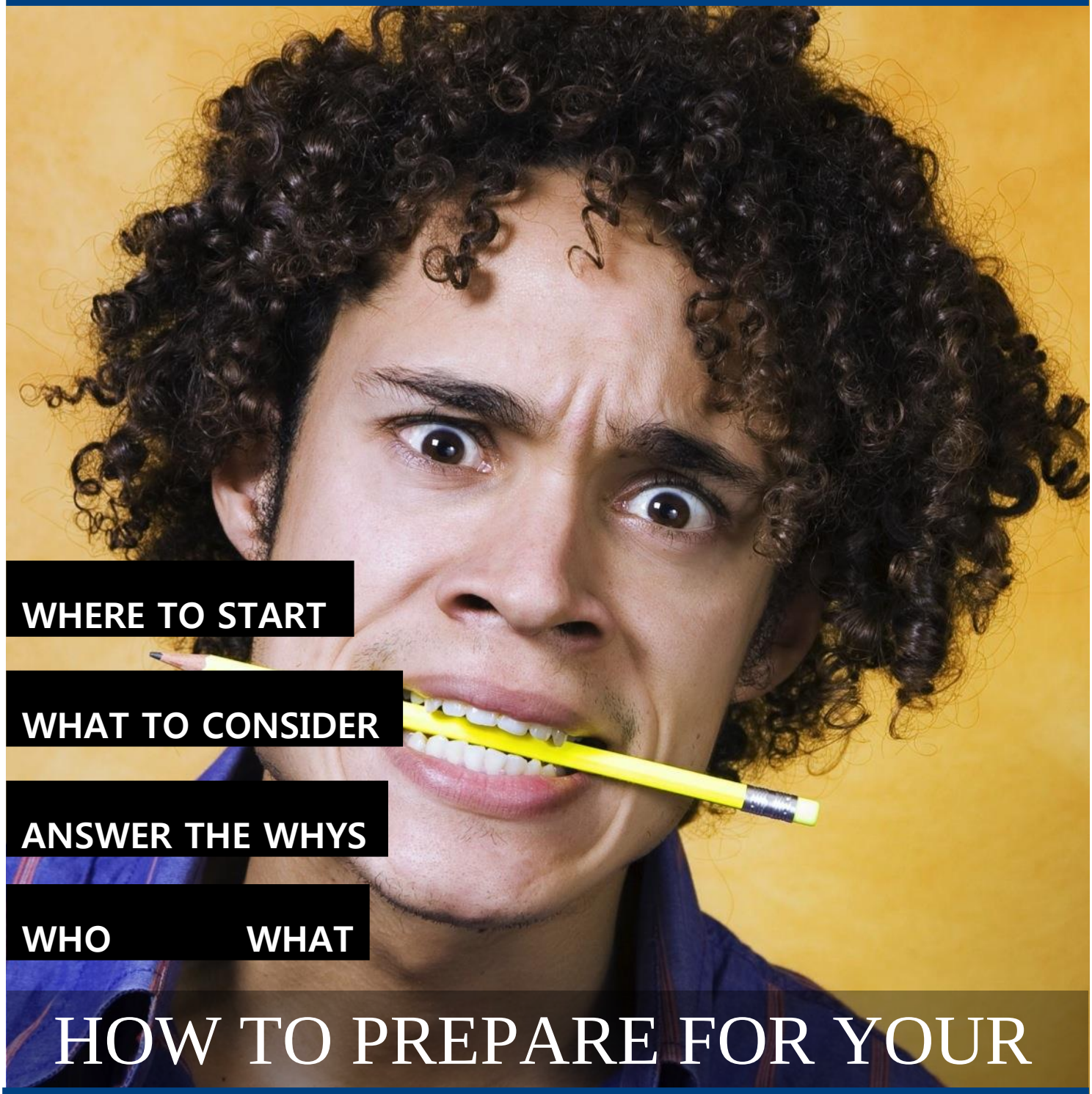
CLIENT'S GUIDE



WHERE TO START

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WHO WHAT

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR DESIGN PROJECT

WHERE TO START

How to create a design brief before engaging an architect

Renovating a house can and should be really exciting. However too often we hear stories unexpected surprises, misunderstandings between the contractor, the client and the designer on the contracted scope of the project, and allowances for items not specified in the contract.

I have decided to do something about it.

It all comes down to the brief

A good working relationship with your architect is based on open, honest communication. This starts with a good brief that helps the architect understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs, aspirations and lifestyle. If your expectations are not clearly outlined and understood by all parties, you run the risk of spending unnecessary money, project complications, and costly delays. The designer and contractor will struggle to understand what to include when pricing your project.

A well thought-out design brief is the foundation for a successful project.

This guide will help you cover critical aspects of a design brief. Towards the end of this document, you will find two worksheets that will help you outline your design brief.

Right then! Let's get started…

WHERE TO START

Your Site

Scrutinize your site and get a real feel for it. Where is the sun in summer? Where is the sun in winter? Where are the views you want to enjoy every day and those you want to exclude? Where are the surrounding houses, other buildings and trees you may or may not want to see? Which parts of the site are most/least noisy? Does the site slope? Put all the information you have about your site in a file to share with your architect (legal paperwork/covenants, existing plans or previous site information).

Spaces

Indoor

A good design can transform the way that we live. Think hard about your family's current and future needs. Map out your daily routine. How many people live in the house? How old are they? Who does what, where? Don't forget your children's rapidly changing needs! Do you want to 'zone' spaces, separate family members, functions and/or pets? Consider the number of floors, rooms and other spaces and describe their use. Make a list of who needs rooms to sleep, work and relax in. Where do you cook and eat? Is the kitchen like a constant thoroughfare for teenagers and large family gatherings? Is your lifestyle formal, casual, relaxed or active? Do you need spaces to entertain at home – indoor and outdoor? What type of home entertainment do you want to include e.g. music, television, projector or areas for storage of equipment? List any special requirements you have, e.g. accessibility, extra storage areas, garage loft space, built in

furniture/shelving, home office. What method of heating do you want? What do other family members want from the whole project?

Outdoor

What do you want to do outdoors? Entertain? Relax? Play? Swim? Supervise children? Grow enough vegetables to be self-sufficient? Do you want a high or low maintenance scheme? What features are important to you? Think about the indoor/outdoor flow of spaces, where the morning sun lands, where its exposed to and sheltered from the wind. Have you always dreamt of an exterior fireplace? Think of your external areas as outdoor rooms, and consider privacy and connections between spaces. Listing your requirements (perhaps using our List of Rooms and Spaces template) will help both you and your architect quickly understand your priorities.

Design Mood and Feeling

This is important. This is your home, where your children and other loved ones are, where they're going to grow up and you're going to have all your family memories. Think about the 'feel' of your project, do you want it to be bold, low-key, industrial, traditional, minimalist, contemporary or organic? Think about your feelings - yes really! For example, what is your favorite time of day? Do you worry about shutting the curtains to protect the furniture from the sun, or do you like to enjoy coffee on the terrace? Is curling up with a good book your favorite hobby, or is it taking the dog for a walk no matter what the weather? Describe spaces, design features and styles that appeal to you and those that don't. Create a

WHERE TO START

'mood board' or scrapbook of fabric swatches, photographs, magazine clippings and anything else that can help your architect understand who you are, how you live and what you want from your project. Use web-based photo sites to assemble and share your ideas.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

The Details

List major appliances you already own or are considering buying and any preferences you have about where you want to put them. Do you really want that American fridge next to your double steam oven? Do you have lots of gadgets that need sockets in your island unit? Is your washing machine on 24/7 and do you want your drying and ironing space right next to it? These details can make a big difference to the way your kitchen and utility space is planned. Note major pieces of furniture or artwork you want to showcase so your architect can provide spaces and sockets for them in the new plans. Better to include it in your planning from day one, than to move in and wonder where you are going to hang your Picasso.

Sketching

Sketch out your thoughts, but don't get too wedded to them. If the work involves altering an existing house you'll be constrained by existing structures and services and if it's a listed building, there will be lots of limitations on what you can change. If it's a new house, let your imagination flow, but be prepared for your architect to suggest other approaches. That is, after all, why you are hiring one!

Materials

List materials you like and dislike (inside and out), but be aware that your budget will be a determining factor in your final choice. Do you have any specific wall, ceiling and floor finishes in mind? Do you like render, timber cladding and tile-hung elevations? Stone, slate, rubber, glass, steel, aluminum... the list is endless.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Timber windows or aluminum? Much will depend on the style of building, but there are choices to be made that will determine how much you spend upfront, and how much you spend on maintenance in the longer term.

Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Regulation and rising energy costs are making sustainable 'green' design an essential consideration rather than a 'nice to have'. There are now minimum requirements laid down by national and local government. Your architect will know all about these and will discuss with you how 'green' you want to and can be. There are lots of renewable energy solutions - solar panels, ground source heat pumps, rainwater harvesting to name but a few. Although these add costs upfront, they can save you money in the longer-term. Much will depend on your budget and how long you plan to live in the building after the work has been done.

Timetable

Think about and share with your architect key target dates that are important to you. When do you want to start and finish the project? Bear in mind that, as a rule of thumb, it takes at least 4-6 months to agree the design, obtain planning permission and prepare construction drawings before building work can commence. You are less likely to be disappointed if you allow at least 6-12 months for work on existing buildings and about 18 months for new buildings.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Budget

We have prepared several typical cost plans for different types of project and these are available on request.

Lastly, have a conversation with yourself and keep asking why you want what it is you say you want. That way you are slowly elaborating your brief into more detail. Include the emotional aspects, as this is the overriding deeper reasoning behind what you want to change about your house. Use the checklists provided below to help you get a deeper understanding of what you want and why you want it.

ANSWER THE WHYS

I want to renovate my house, why?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

The nuts and bolts

Having listed the whys, we have dealt to the big elephant in the room. Now it is time to dwell on the nuts and bolts. The following is a series of questions that will further elaborate on your brief.

Who will live in your home now and in the future?

What different new activities will you need to accommodate?

How do you want your home to fit with the existing environment?

Are there any health and safety issues you need to take account of?

What would you really like to live in?

What do you want your home interior to look like?

What colors will it have?

What facilities for cooling and heating do you want?

Do you want to install or upgrade existing security and/or audio systems?

Do you want a total makeover or a staged process?

What is your budget?

Does your budget allow for consultant fees and GST?

What level of involvement do you want in the management of your renovation?

THE NEXT STEP

Congratulations! You now have the key information that will help you lay a successful foundation for how to prepare for your design project.

Unfortunately, I can't include every important piece of information about this very important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the brief will differ based on a multitude of factors. But with the concepts explained in this guide, you have the critical information to help you create a design brief that will ensure that your project is a success.

If you are in the process of looking for an architect for your project, let's talk. I can help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could doom your project to failure. I offer a custom **need and options review** where I will identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options.

Typically, the **need and options review** saves my clients *thousands of dollars* and *weeks* of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To read more about the **need and options review** as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important to your project's success visit my website. If you are ready to talk now, please give me a call.

Best wishes for the success of your project!