

3 WAYS TO...

Plan a project

Q How much research is involved before we engage an architect and builder to do our renovation? How can we help speed up the design process? *Ashley Smith, Concord, NSW*



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A The more information you can provide to the architect – such as style, colours and examples that you like – the faster and more accurate the design process will be. Likewise, the more detailed the design documentation – including finishes, selections and construction details – the more accurate your building prices will be and the less chance of unexpected cost blow-outs. As an independent building coach, I always recommend you get at least three quotes for any consultant or contractor. An important part of your research when engaging an architect or designer is to define your overall budget. The devil is in the detail, and this is definitely the case in the building industry.

A It's important to find an architect who can work with you to realise your ideas. Identify house designs that you like, then find out who designed them. Seek out recommendations from friends or colleagues. Research architects online and look at sites such as www.architecture.com.au. The architect you then hire can help you find the right builder. As sustainability is increasingly important, you should ensure the architect and builder help you address this issue. Ideas to consider include ensuring the house is as energy- and water-efficient as possible, that the materials are suitable for the purpose, and that they have low impact in their production and usage.

A Ask yourself what goals the renovation will accomplish. What are your special needs? Think about architectural styles: do you want something modern or would you prefer to maintain the present look and feel? Get some ideas together: put magazine clippings and personal sketches into a scrapbook to show to your architect. A copy of site plans from any previous renovation and the title copy will help the architect confirm measurements, enabling him or her to focus on the design. Also, establish what kind of budget you have. The architect can then explore all your options, with care and sensitivity, and may even propose a staged renovation, if necessary. **H&G**

Have a question? H&G's little black book contains the who's who and what's what of interior design and all manner of household matters. If you have a decorating dilemma, send it to us and we'll seek the professional opinions of the best in the business.