

5 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Decorator

1. What is my budget?

Probably the first and most important thing a person should do before hiring a decorator is define a budget. If you have a partner, make sure both of you agree on the budget you have established. When meeting with a decorator, you want to give them a dollar amount you are willing to spend and make certain they can work with that number. Ask any potential decorators you are interviewing the following questions:

- Are my expectations for this project reasonable given my budget?
- If my expectations are not reasonable, where do you suggest I cut back? (Make sure their suggestions are in line with your priorities.)
- Are you comfortable working within my budget?

So, to recap...**define a budget** and **ask the tough questions** so that you do not find yourself overextended before the project is complete because this can often lead to an unfinished home.

2. What is my lifestyle?

It is very important to ask yourself, "What is going to make me comfortable in my own home?"

How can I make my home conducive to my lifestyle? Here are some questions you might ask yourself to make it easier to answer this question. What do you (and your family) like to do in your home? Do you enjoy entertaining? If so, what type of entertaining? Do you host lavish parties and formal sit-down dinners or do you host game night? Do you have young children that need space to play and run around? If so, do you want all of the rooms to be child friendly or only some? Are you busy all of the time and want a home that is easy to take care of or do you enjoy having a home that requires lots of attention? Make a list of what's important to you and your family and share this list with any decorators you are potentially going to hire. It is very important for the decorator to understand the type of life you lead and to know your priorities so that they can portray this in your home.

3. What is my style?

You may be looking at this question and thinking, "style...I don't have style. This is precisely why I am hiring a decorator." While you may not be a style maven, you do have it in you. It is just a matter of cultivating it. Think of it this way. Have you ever gone to a friend or family member's house and thought 'I really like how this house looks.' Maybe a beautiful antique piece caught your eye or a particular paint color stood out. Perhaps you liked the layout of the house and how the space was used. Or, like many of us have done but would never admit to, you have gone to a friend or family member's house and thought, 'Yuk! What were they thinking when they chose that paint color or that rug and oh my, they call that art!' Make note of homes that you find attractive and the parts within the home that appeal to you. This will be your like and dislike list that you will share with your decorator. Another way to figure out your

tastes is to look at home magazines. Save pictures of homes you like and share them with your decorator. Here's a tip: Call these pages you rip out of the magazines "tear sheets." This is sure to impress your decorator. Heck, take it one step further and write notes on the "tear sheets."

They will wonder why you are even bothering to hire them. Just remember, finding your style is like cooking a good meal. You put together various ingredients (Whisper gray walls with white trim, cream marble countertops, customized cabinetry, and a beautiful antique French chandelier) that you enjoy and voila, you have a beautiful kitchen to eat your delicious home cooked meal in!

4. What is my greatest fear about hiring a decorator?

Hiring a decorator can be nerve-racking. You may have several concerns for instance, you may be thinking, 'what if the decorator doesn't listen to me?' 'What if I don't like the direction of the they are going but am too nervous to let the decorator know?' 'What if this process becomes a lot more expensive than I expected?' These are all valid concerns. It is a bit like going to a new hairdresser. It is exciting but can also be a nail-biting experience. You tell the hairdresser what you would like and show her a picture of the desired style. The hairdresser begins cutting and after a little while you realize you are not happy with the haircut thus far. You realize it looks nothing like the picture you showed her or it does look like the picture but you conclude this is not going to be a good style on you. You get that knot in your stomach and try to say something but you are too nervous. You think to yourself, 'what if she gets upset? I don't want to insult her.' 'I'm sure it will turn out fine. I should just wait until she is done and hope for the best.'

You fight some tears back but you know you are going to be disappointed. And, in the end you are. Don't let this happen with your home. It is a big investment and at the end of the day, *you* will be the one living in it. So, communicate with your decorator not just at the beginning of the process but throughout. Figure out with the decorator what the best form of communication will be. Some people like having face-to-face meetings while others are comfortable with a phone call or e-mail. Also, talk about how often you would like to meet. Is it best for you to meet on a weekly basis or a monthly basis? Remember, your decorator is not a mind reader and so you must let them know what you are thinking. Communication is the key to a successful project.

Had you told the hairdresser that you were not happy when you had those initial feelings of doubt, she might have been able to fix it and give you exactly the haircut you were hoping for saving you a lot of money on hats.

5. What is my idea of a finished home?

This may sound like a strange question but it's not. A finished home can mean different things to different people and it is important to think about what this means to you. To some people freshly painted walls and new furniture complete the decorating process. Others imagine a home complete with custom cabinetry, lighting that accentuates each room beautifully, and artwork and accessories placed perfectly around the house. Whatever your desire, it is best to determine this before you start interviewing decorators and make certain to disclose in the initial meeting what your idea of a finished home is as it is important to be on the same page from the

beginning.

So, what have we learned? First, communicate, communicate, and communicate! From that initial meeting let your decorator know what you are thinking in terms of a budget, your desired outcome for your home, the best way to keep communication consistent throughout the project.

Second, share any initial concerns or fears you have about hiring a decorator. Lastly and most important, have fun! This should be an enjoyable process and one that you take much pride in.

The [Interior Decorator in Boston, MA](#) specializes in fine traditional residential and commercial interior design and custom created furniture. For more information contact Catherine-Interiors at 617.227.0700 | info@catherine-interiors.com and visit our online [portfolio](#).