

How To Choose a Type of House Designer

(An Architect, Designer, or Draftsperson)

It's your choice whom you work with for the design of your home. Architects, designers, and draftspeople can all perform that role at varying capacities. But each have different skills and will each perform the task differently. This worksheet will help you make the best decision for your specific situation.

But first, you need to understand the permitting requirements of your local jurisdiction.

Does your local Building Department require a licensed architect to stamp architectural drawings in order to obtain a building permit for your project?

If you are unsure, call your local Building Department and ask. Given a small description of your project, a building official will be able to tell you whether a licensed architect is required or not.

- If you do, in fact, need a licensed architect to stamp drawings, you will not need to go any further with this worksheet. You already know you need to work with an architect for the design of your home.
- If you don't need a licensed architect to stamp drawings, then this worksheet will help you decide the type of person that will be best for your specific situation.

The following questionnaire is intended to clarify your preferences and thoughts towards various project attributes as they relate to:

- Design
- Project Complexity
- Control & Responsibility
- Cost/Value

These questions will help you understand yourself, your project goals, and your particular project characteristics. They will help you determine how important design is to you, how complex your project is, how much control and responsibility you want, and how much money you want to commit to the design process.

Answer each question honestly and to the best of your ability. Some questions may require you to discuss the topic with your spouse, your banker, or other people with previous experience building projects to arrive at an answer. If you're unsure of an answer, leave it blank.

When finished answering all the questions, review your answers in reference to the following criteria:

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If you answered mostly 1's:

Based on your preferences and project characteristics, a draftsperson may be the best choice for you.

If you answered mostly 3's:

Based on your preferences and project characteristics, an architectural designer may be the best choice for you.

If you answered mostly 5's:

Based on your preferences and project characteristics, an architect may be the best choice for you.

This questionnaire makes very broad associations and generalizations related to the selection of a design professional. Working with a designer is an investment (big or small) so make sure to select the right type of person for you.

If you realize you feel more strongly about certain questions, you may wish to weight these answers more heavily than others. Weighted answers are beyond the scope of this worksheet, but use your own discretion and judgment in deciding how to interpret the results of this worksheet and ultimately who to work with to design your home.

For more information about each type of design professional and their capacities, refer to the following article: [Who Should I Use To Design My House?](#)

Note: The assumptions contained herein and conclusions made from such assumptions may not be suitable for all situations. Users of this questionnaire are advised to do their own due diligence related to making decisions about who to work with to design their project. Users shall take full responsibility for any and all actions taken as a result of information presented in this questionnaire.

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Design:

1. How important is the architectural design of your house project to you?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How important is it to work with someone who is skilled in solving complex problems and creating unique design solutions?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How important is optimizing the placement and orientation of your house on your site to take advantage of passive heating and cooling, to minimize site disturbance, and to control costs?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How important is it that you have a well-documented and coordinated drawing set from which a builder or general contractor can build?

A thorough drawing set shows not only the design intent and aesthetics but also waterproofing details, code requirements, structural requirements, and coordination of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment.

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Complexity of Project:

1. How complicated is your project?

For a new house: Do you want a custom design or are you OK with customizing a builder's spec model?

For an addition: Do you want something unique or is the project fairly standard?

For a remodel: Is it a small easy remodel or a large whole-house remodel?

General: Do you want large window walls, large roof overhangs, or other complicated architectural features or integrations?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How complex are your space requirements?

Do you have typical rooms like kitchen, bath, bedroom, living room and office? OR Do you have rooms that require more coordination or design like media rooms, saunas, etc? What about specific requirements for accessibility?

Not Complex					Very Complex
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How complex are your project goals?

Do you have specific and strict project goals relating to aesthetics, structural or energy performance, budget, or timeline?

Not Complex					Very Complex
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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4. How complex is your site?

Do you have a steep slope, high water table, poor soil qualities, or any other unique features that make your site difficult to build on?

Not Complex					Very Complex
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How complicated or involved will the permitting and approval process be for your project?

Not Complex					Very Complex
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Control/Responsibility:

1. How important is it to have a design professional involved to help guide you through the entire design and construction process and to act as your advocate on the job site?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How much responsibility do you want to have in the management of the project?

Do you want to be responsible for the design, the drawings, the approval and permitting process, soliciting bids for construction, overseeing construction and controlling money during the process?

Not At All					All
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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3. How important is it to you to have a licensed professional who has extensive experience, education, and responsibility in protecting the life, safety, and welfare of the public working on your project?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost/Investment:

1. How important is working with someone who has the lowest cost for design fees?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How important is it to you to work with someone who provides added value to your project above just providing a set of plans?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How important is it to you to minimize long-term maintenance and utility costs?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How important is it to work with someone who increases the chances of providing a design that will increase property values and provide a bigger return on investment down the road?

Not Important					Very Important
1	2	3	4	5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>