

Nest Building

BEFORE YOU HIRE A DESIGNER ...

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Imagine hiring a graphic artist to design a jacket for a book as yet unwritten. It sounds absurd.

When you hire an interior decorator or designer, you represent the content of your own book and your home provides your front and back covers. No artist can work on the cover of a book of blank pages any more than an interior designer can work on your home if you haven't decided what it is all about.

Here are three important steps to take before you seek design advice:

1. Survey the space you are planning to work on and, very specifically, make lists of the things you like and don't like about it.
2. Jot down a few words describing what you expect and hope to achieve in the space.
3. Establish a budget.

Once you have a rough idea of where you are going with a project, you are ready to consult a professional to help you get there.

Find someone you like. Make sure they listen as much as they speak and that they ask questions about who you are, your lifestyle and your goals. Be open to their suggestions—they are bound to come up with a few ideas you may never have considered—but don't forget to remain true to your own sense of the project. Your designer works for you and is doing his or her best to interpret your vision, not apply his or her own.

If the graphic artist fills his book cover with images of spaceships and aliens, the writer will be obliged to write science fiction.

The same can happen in your home if you neglect your homework. Suddenly, you are forced to become the content—the alien—fitting in with the design instead of the other way around.