

7 key tips to get the most out of your architect or building designer

- #1 **Be prepared.** Think about the primary functions you need to address and your priorities for the project. The better you can convey these ideas the better. Consider preparing a simple scrapbook of photos that have caught your eye. Visual examples are always much clearer ways to communicate than just relying on terms like “contemporary” which can mean many things to different people.
- #2 **Try not to be over prepared.** A scrapbook is a great visual aid to develop a brief around, but a short novel detailing each room with everything from paint colour to power point type and location is probably too much in the early stages. Make sure you leave scope for design exploration and resolution; if you already have the building designed in your head and you’re not willing to consider design input then you may not need a designer after all. A draftsman might be a better bet.
- #3 **Be on the same page.** It’s not always easy but it is important that you and your partner deliver a consistent message. It is very difficult to design to a brief when there are in fact two conflicting briefs. Whilst a good relationship with your designer will encourage robust discussion and resolution of your brief, you will not get the best result if you are sending mixed messages.
- #4 **Quality trumps quantity.** Think carefully about the spaces you need to ensure they suit your lifestyle. Where possible invest in high quality spaces rather than high quantities of space, these are specialties of experienced designers.
- #5 **Allow scope for innovation.** The person you have engaged is a professional problem solver. Don’t quash the potential of a unique and innovative design solution on the basis of it being different... do you want a custom design or just another house?...
- #6 **Be realistic about your budget.** Your designer should be able to give you an idea about whether or not your brief and budget are in the same ballpark. If you do need a reality check then the sooner you adjust the better.
- #7 **Stay true to your brief... not your family and friends preferences!** It can be very useful to bounce ideas off people who are close to you but be careful how strongly they influence you; after all it is your house. Concentrate on creating a design that is a reflection of yourself, rather than something that will appeal to the masses.

