

A beginner's guide to KITCHEN PLANNING

Buying a new kitchen is an exciting process, but with so many choices to make, it can sometimes be quite overwhelming. From deciding on the right layout and choosing tradesmen, to finding your perfect cabinetry and stylish appliances, there's a lot to think about. Follow our five simple steps and you'll soon be on the way to creating your dream design



1 BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT
It's useful in the very early stages to look at what you dislike about your existing kitchen. Make a list of all the things that annoy you – lack of storage, old-fashioned design, poor layout – and think of ways to improve them. Build a scrapbook of kitchens and accessories you like, but make sure you look over it carefully and weed out things you've changed your mind about before visiting any kitchen showrooms. Try to have a clear idea of the cabinetry and colour you want at the start – there are so many other decisions to make, it helps to have a solid base for your design.

3 SET YOUR BUDGET
This will ultimately decide where you buy your kitchen, but remember that your money won't all be spent on the cabinetry and appliances alone. Will your project involve building work, for instance, and are you planning to organise that yourself or will someone else do it for you? Even the simplest redesign is likely to involve builders, to remove the old units. You might need electricians and plumbers, too, if you're changing the layout of the kitchen. Also consider worktop and flooring choices carefully – for example, underfloor heating will impact on what floor you can have, which might add to the cost.

'You can never have too many plug points, too much storage or too much clear working space'

YSANNE BROOKS, EDITOR

2 USE THE EXPERTS
From budget DIY stores to high-end kitchen specialists, the experts are there to help you. Make use of online or in-store design systems and visit a few kitchen showrooms to get a variety of quotes; don't assume that a specialist will be too expensive, as many stock kitchens for a range of budgets. Often, experts' advice can make all the difference. A good designer will ask about you, your family and how you visualise using the space, as well as practicalities such as style, design and cost. Give them your wish list, which might include granite worktops, an island unit or family-sized appliances.

MAGIC NUMBERS

- 50cm** In smaller kitchens and galley designs, standard 60cm-deep cabinets may be a tight fit, so think about replacing one or both of the runs with reduced-depth units of 50cm.
- 60cm** Leave at least 50cm – ideally 60cm – between the units and your kitchen door to guarantee clear, unobstructed entry into the room.
- 90cm** Most kitchen worktops sit at about 90cm high. However, if you are taller or shorter than average, speak to your kitchen designer about reducing or increasing this to suit.
- 1.2m** If you have a galley kitchen, allow a distance of at least 1.2m between facing doors, so they can open with ease and there's room for two people to work in the kitchen together.
- 1.7m** For the perfect working triangle, keep the distance between the oven, fridge and sink to no more than 1.7m. This will ensure you're not walking huge distances around your room.

PHOTO MARCUS PEEL, IPC+ SYNDICATION

4 MAKING CHOICES AND PLANNING CAREFULLY
Now it's time to start getting organised. Do you need a builder or an architect? Are you planning an extension that requires plans to be drawn up? Does your new design call for planning permission or building regulations approval? You need to find this out at the start, as it will help you to avoid costly changes later. Obtain a number of quotes and contact builders well in advance, as the best are often busy. Choose your kitchen designer and make sure that they are on your wavelength. As important as style and price is a designer who understands your needs and wants.

5 THE FINISHING TOUCHES
A fresh design often includes new appliances. If you're going to a large retailer, kitchen showroom or high-end specialist, you can often buy your appliances through them. If you prefer to buy them yourself – the internet is a good place to source bargains – then coordinate their delivery after speaking to the kitchen showroom or builder. Worktops, flooring and taps can also be supplied by the company you're buying your cabinetry from but, again, if you buy direct, ask your builder or kitchen company for a comprehensive schedule to avoid delays.

JARGON BUSTER

- **BUILT-IN** Appliances that are built into a cupboard, forming a 'bank'. Generally, this applies to ovens, coffee machines and warming drawers.
- **BUILT-UNDER** Appliances that are built into cabinetry below the worktop. Usually dishwashers, wine coolers and ovens.
- **CAD** This stands for computer-aided design. Many companies will give you 3D CAD drawings of your layout, showing materials and appliances.
- **CARCASS** The frames and walls of your kitchen cupboards. These come in a variety of materials and a number of frame widths.
- **CUT-OUTS** The holes that house sinks, hobs, and so on, within your worktop. Granite, stone and composite cut-outs need templating by an expert.
- **FITTED FURNITURE** Kitchen cabinetry that has been fixed in place. It's often designed to fit a specific area.
- **INTEGRATED APPLIANCES** These are hidden behind cabinetry doors.
- **KICKPLATE OR PLINTH** A panel that hides the cabinetry leg supports.
- **SPLASHBACK** A length of material that's positioned behind cooking areas and sinks to protect walls from splashes.
- **UNDERCOUNTER APPLIANCES** The type that sit below a worksurface but are not built into a carcass.
- **UPSTAND** A continuation of the worksurface that protects the wall.



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OUR TOP 5 KITCHEN MUST-HAVES

1 GREAT LIGHTING
In the kitchen, you need well-illuminated areas for preparing and cooking food, so you can see what you're doing, and softer, mood lighting elsewhere. LEDs in plinths add an extra dimension.



2 EYE-CATCHING EXTRAS
This pop-up power point is a practical and attractive feature for a compact kitchen. It is there when you need it, then recesses back into the worktop when not in use.



3 DURABLE SURFACES
The floor and worktops are the most-used areas of your kitchen, so make sure they're fit for their purpose. Investing in the best surfaces you can afford will always be money well spent.



PHOTOS ALEXANDER JAMES



4 HARDWORKING APPLIANCES
Make sure your appliances are right for you. There's no sense in having top-of-the-range models with a huge array of features if you're an infrequent cook, for instance.

EASY WAYS TO KEEP THE COST DOWN

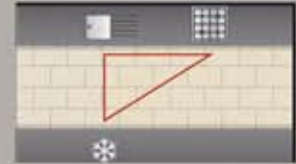
- Don't change plumbing or electricity points
- Retain your old carcasses and just add new doors
- Keep cut-outs in your worktops to a minimum
- Buy appliances that do two or more jobs, such as washer/dryers or combination ovens
- Get lots of quotes and try your luck by asking for a discount



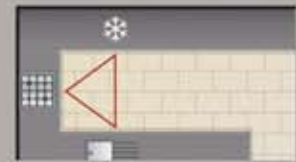
5 BRILLIANT STORAGE
Use as much of your available space as possible with ladders, specialist storage, and bespoke solutions. You might want some possessions on show and others behind doors.

PLAN YOUR PERFECT KITCHEN LAYOUT

The size and shape of your space will often dictate what kind of kitchen layout you have. Below are the five key schemes and our top tips for making them work:



GALLEY Keep wall units to a minimum to avoid a corridor effect. Consider handleless units for a sleek look and brighten up the room with clever lighting.



U-SHAPED OR G-SHAPED Make the most of corners, with carousels or pull-out drawers. If your U-shape is wide enough, think about adding a breakfast bar.



L-SHAPED If space is tight, think carefully before adding too many wall units. Ensure you have enough space between the hob, fridge and sink to work comfortably.



ISLAND Position all the key elements on one side of the island. Place the hob or sink on the workstation and the other two appliances in the wall units behind.



OPEN PLAN This type of layout is more flexible, but choose your appliances carefully – you don't want cooking smells or noise encroaching into the living area.