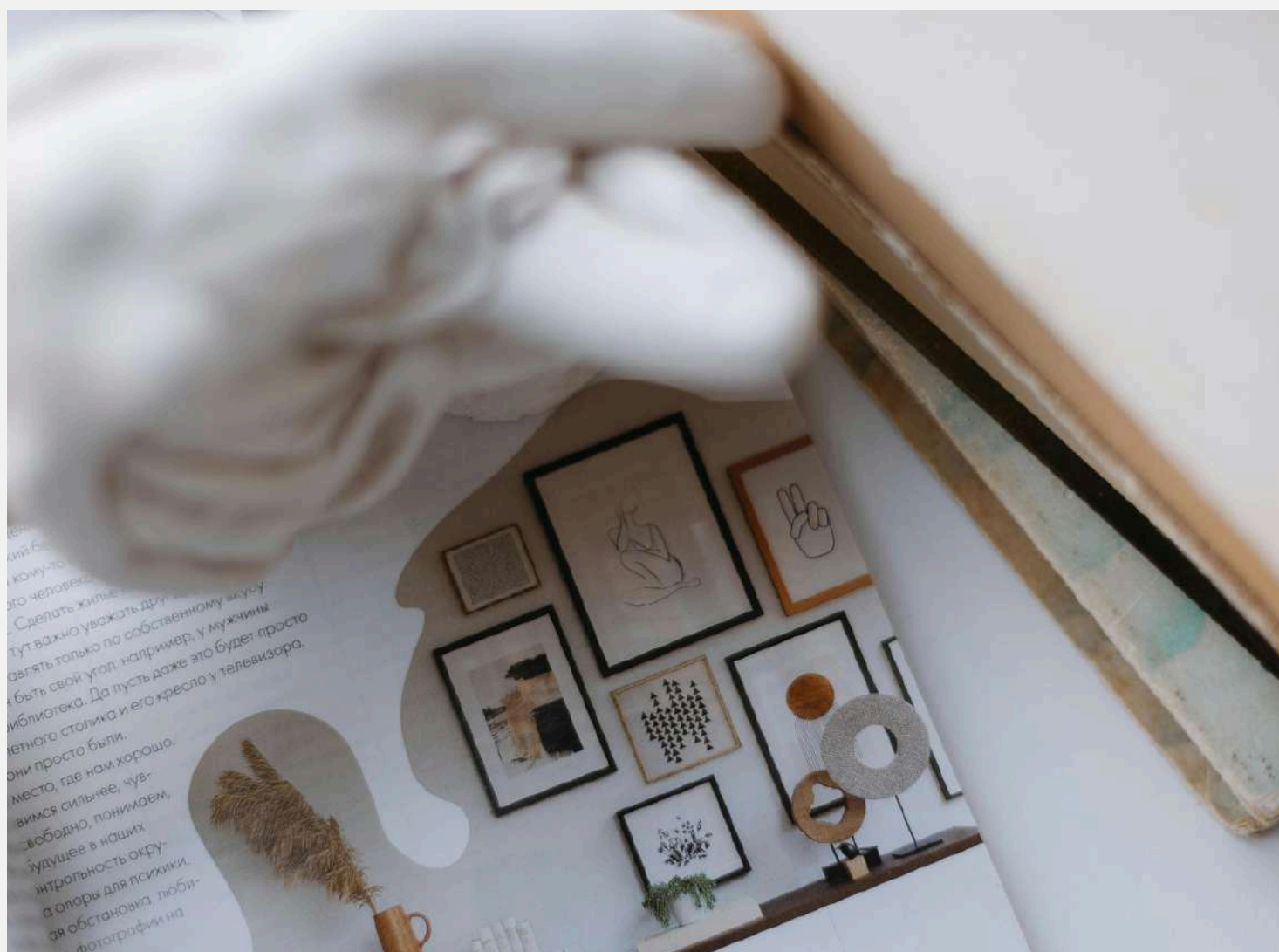




AMY COURTNEY DESIGN

BESPOKE LUXURY INTERIORS IN CONNECTICUT, NEW YORK & BEYOND



Pre-Project Planning Guide

Designing with Confidence Starts Before the First Mood Board

Your home is more than a project—it's where your life unfolds. And choosing someone to reimagine it with you is a decision that deserves clarity, care, and confidence. Whether you're dreaming of a full-home transformation or refreshing just a few rooms, the most successful design journeys start before the design itself—with thoughtful preparation.

This guide was created to help you navigate those early steps with ease. Inside, you'll find five key areas to reflect on before you sign with an interior designer. In each section, I'll walk you through what to know about your home, what to ask your designer, what to consider as you evaluate your options, and what red flags to watch out for along the way.

My goal? To help you feel calm, clear, and in control as you take this next step—because when you're informed, you're empowered to find the designer who's not only skilled, but deeply aligned with you.

So grab a pen, your floor plan (if you've got one!), and let's start planning with intention. Your dream space is closer than you think!



Understanding Your Lifestyle & Design Goals



Before we talk color palettes or floor plans, the most important thing to understand is you. Your lifestyle, habits, priorities, and how you move through your home all deeply influence the success of a design project.





What You Should Know About Your Home

- Which rooms do you spend the most time in—and why?
- Do you entertain often, or do you prefer quiet, intimate spaces?
- What frustrates you about your current layout, storage, or lighting?
- What aesthetic do you gravitate toward, even if you can't yet name it?



What You Should Ask the Interior Designer About

- How do you gather information about my lifestyle and routines?
- How will your design process reflect my personal priorities?
- Can you show past projects where you solved similar functional issues?



Things You Have to Consider About the Interior Designer

- Do they ask thoughtful questions about your daily life?
- Are they listening to what you want, or only pushing their own style?
- Do they seem genuinely interested in how your home will support your lifestyle?



► What to Watch Out For:

- Designers who jump into style boards or product suggestions before asking about your lifestyle.
- Vague or generic intake processes that don't tailor the design to how you live.
- A strong "signature style" that might override your personal taste or needs.

A photograph of a minimalist interior scene. In the foreground, a light-colored wooden chair with a curved backrest is partially visible. Behind it, a matching wooden table holds a small potted plant with green leaves in a pink pot. The background is a soft, out-of-focus wall with warm, neutral tones.

REMEMBER:

A beautiful space is meaningless if it doesn't work for you.

This section is the foundation of personalized design—it ensures your designer is building a space for your real life, not just for the portfolio.

Clarifying Your Scope & Budget



Luxury doesn't always mean lavish—it means intentional, refined, and tailored. But knowing how much of your home you're updating and what you're investing in is crucial to move forward wisely.





What You Should Know About Your Home

- Which areas need cosmetic updates, and which require structural changes?
- Are you working in phases or tackling the whole home at once?
- What's your maximum comfortable investment—not just the dreamy one?



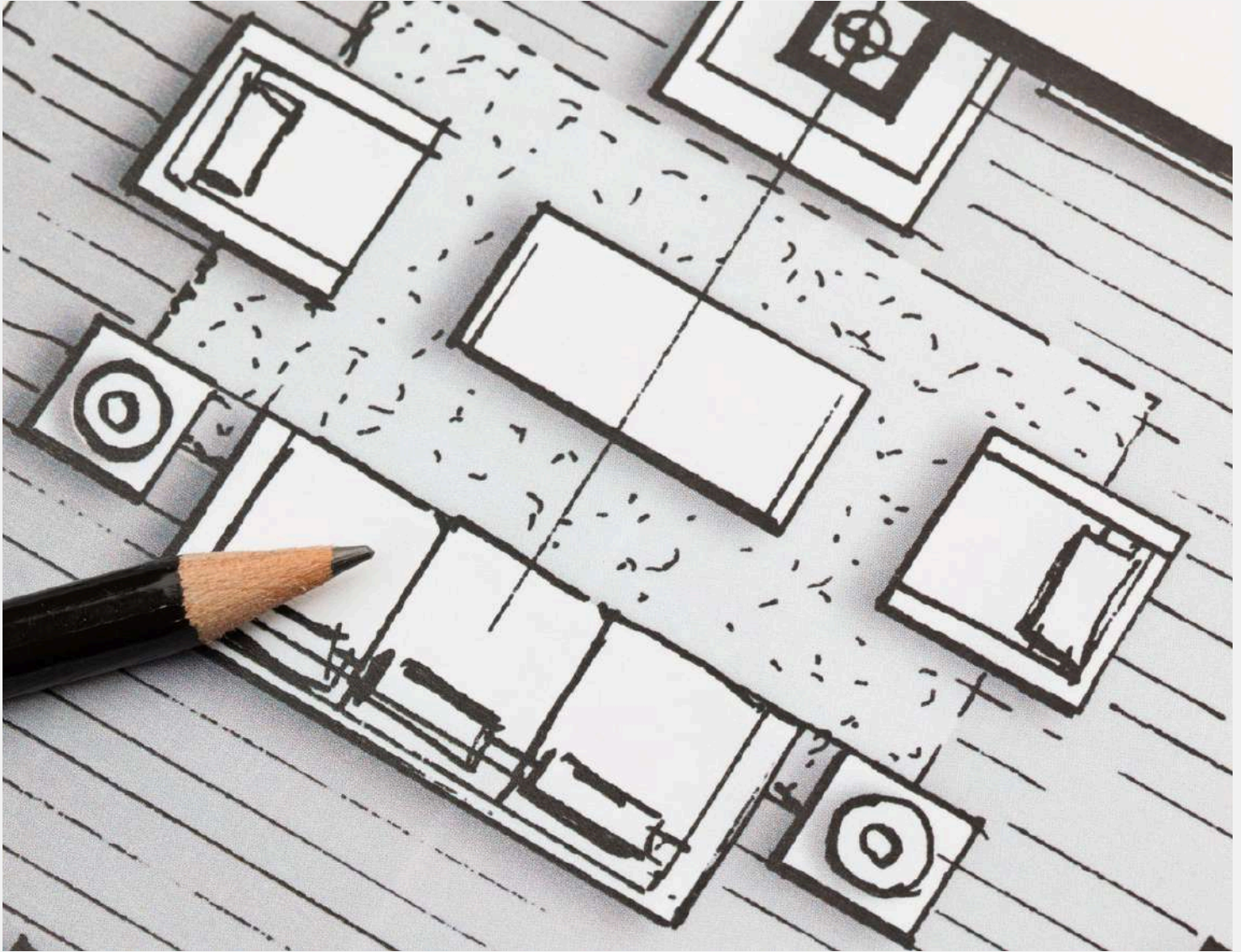
What You Should Ask the Interior Designer About

- What's your process for defining scope before the design begins?
- How do you approach budgeting—do you work within mine or set your own?
- Can you help prioritize what's possible within my range?
- Will I receive a detailed contract outlining deliverables, timelines, payment schedules, and responsibilities?



Things You Have to Consider About the Interior Designer

- Are they transparent and realistic about what's achievable?
- Do they offer budget management or procurement services?
- Are they comfortable talking about money clearly and professionally?
- Do they present a professional, easy-to-understand contract that protects both parties?



► What to Watch Out For:

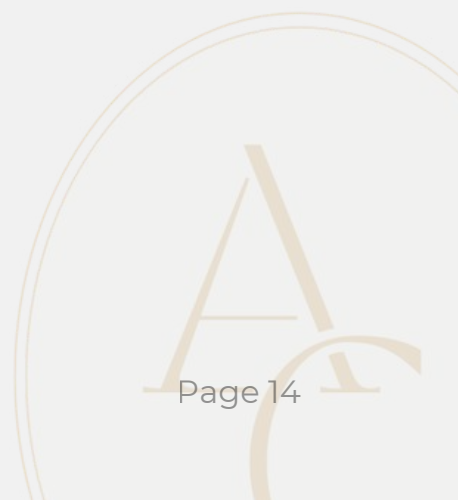
- Designers who avoid giving ballpark estimates early on.
- Unclear service packages with hidden add-ons or extra charges later.
- No defined process for prioritizing needs when budget constraints arise.
- Vague or overly simplified contracts with no clear terms around timelines, scope, or revisions.



REMEMBER:

Scope and budget alignment prevent future frustrations.

This clarity ensures your designer isn't just dreaming with you—but building a plan grounded in what's possible.



Project Timeline & Expectations



Design takes time, especially when you're not cutting corners. The timeline is about more than just deadlines—it's about understanding the rhythm and pace of your project.





What You Should Know About Your Home

- Do you have a hard deadline (like a move-in or event)?
- Will you be living in the home during the renovation?
- Are there constraints like HOA approvals or local permitting?



What You Should Ask the Interior Designer About

- What is the estimated duration of this project from concept to installation?
- How do you handle delays or vendor issues?
- How often will we meet or communicate during the process?



Things You Have to Consider About the Interior Designer

- Do they have experience managing full-scale timelines?
- Are they calm and organized under pressure?
- Do they have systems in place for keeping you informed?



► What to Watch Out For:

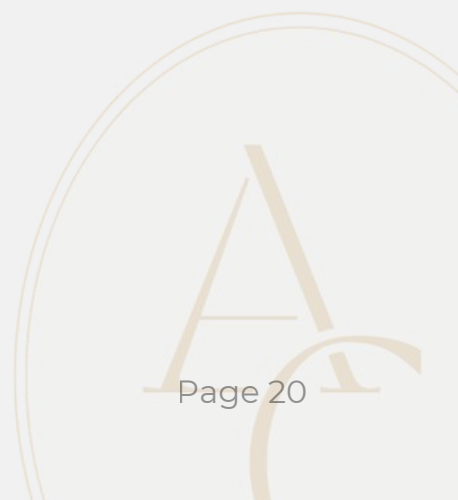
- Overpromising on timelines without accounting for ordering or permitting delays.
- Lack of communication about progress checkpoints or delivery schedules. These details must be clearly explained to you.
- No system in place for how they'll manage unexpected timeline hiccups.



REMEMBER:

Design is a collaboration,
not a sprint.

Understanding the pace
keeps you grounded,
reduces surprises, and
builds trust with your
designer.



Design Process & Collaboration Style



Every designer works differently. Some are highly collaborative; others prefer to take the lead. Before you commit, it's important to know how involved you want to be—and how your designer operates.





What You Should Know About Your Home

- Are there non-negotiable elements you want to keep (furniture, artwork, heirlooms)?
- Do you prefer being hands-on or trusting someone to take the reins?
- If you've worked with a designer before, what worked or didn't?



What You Should Ask the Interior Designer About

- What is your process from concept to installation?
- How are decisions presented and approved?
- Can I be as involved—or hands-off—as I'd like?



Things You Have to Consider About the Interior Designer

- Do they welcome feedback with professionalism?
- Are they flexible with your preferences—or rigid in their vision?
- Do you feel comfortable and respected in your conversations?



► What to Watch Out For:

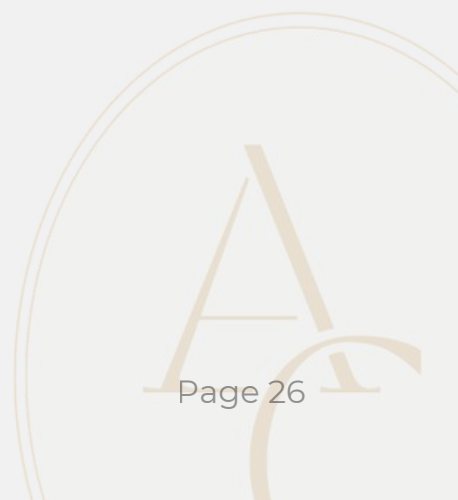
- A designer who's either too rigid or too vague about their creative process.
- No clear decision-making structure or way for you to give feedback.
- Designers who get defensive or dismissive when you voice concerns or ideas.



REMEMBER:

Design is personal.

The right collaboration style ensures your voice is heard and respected, while also trusting the professional to elevate your space with clarity and grace.



Their Portfolio, Reputation & Fit



Yes, the photos matter. But a truly great designer brings more than beauty—they bring integrity, follow-through, and client experience that leaves you feeling taken care of.





What You Should Know About Your Home

- Does your space resemble the scale or style of the homes in their portfolio?
- Do you resonate with the overall mood, tone, and level of detail in their past work?



What You Should Ask the Interior Designer About

- Can I speak to past clients or read testimonials?
- Do you have experience with projects similar to mine in scale or complexity?
- What sets your approach apart from other designers?



Things You Have to Consider About the Interior Designer

- Does their aesthetics align with what you envision—even if it's not an exact match?
- Do their past clients speak highly of their communication and follow-through?
- Do you like them enough to trust them in your space for the next few months?



► What to Watch Out For:

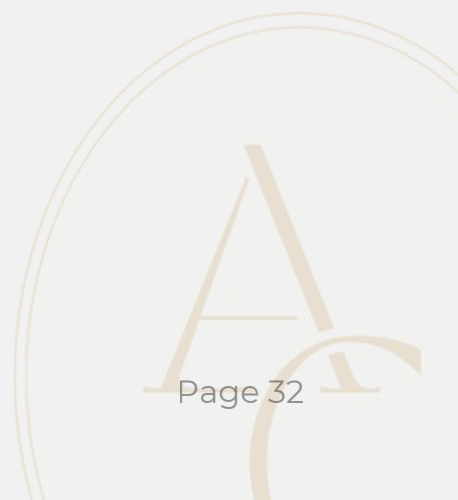
- Beautiful photos on their portfolio—but project highlights from actual clients or case studies to back it up.
- Lack of experience in homes similar to yours (in size, layout, or complexity).
- A gut feeling that the connection isn't quite right, even if their work looks great.



REMEMBER:

A strong portfolio tells part of the story—but client experience tells the rest.

You're not just hiring for a look—you're hiring for a relationship, a process, and a peace of mind.





To the One Dreaming of a Home That Truly Reflects You.

If you've made it to the end of this guide—thank you. It means you're taking this next chapter of your home seriously, and that tells me a lot already.

I've spent nearly two decades helping homeowners, builders, and developers bring their spaces to life—not just with elegance, but with ease. Having grown up between blueprints and fabric swatches, I've learned that true luxury isn't just about what a room looks like—it's how it makes you feel.

My team and I approach every project with organization, empathy, and a deep respect for your lifestyle. Many of our clients come to us unsure of how to explain what they need. But after just one conversation, we begin to translate those feelings and ideas into a plan that feels just right—for you.

If you're ready to explore what working together might look like, I'd love to connect. You can book a consultation below, or browse more about our services and past work on my website, www.amycourtneydesign.com.

Looking forward to hearing your story and helping you create a home that feels like a true reflection of who you are.

Warmly,
Amy Courtney
Amy Courtney Design



AMY COURTNEY

D E S I G N

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