Analysing a Client Brief: A

Step-by-Step Guide

Understanding a client’s needs and preferences is at the heart of successful interior design. The process begins with gathering information via a well-crafted client questionnaire, which is then distilled into a detailed client brief. Analysing this brief helps designers identify the essential elements to create a space that meets the client’s expectations. This article demonstrates how to move from a questionnaire to a fully analysed brief, ensuring nothing is overlooked



Fig 1. Pexels (2024) Clients and Interior Designer https://[www.pexels.com/photo/a-man-and-](http://www.pexels.com/photo/a-man-and-) woman-standing-beside-a-table-with-a-person-8292836/

# Step 1: Example Client Questionnaire

To fully understand the process of analysing responses in order to extract the correct information, it’s important to develop an accurate Design Proposal. Here is an example of a client questionnaire that an interior designer would use:

1. General Information

Name(s): Sarah and John Smith. Address: 14 Rosewood Lane, London.

Contact Details: [sarah.johnsmith@example.com,](mailto:sarah.johnsmith@example.com) 07700 900123

1. Project Details

What space(s) are we working on? Living room.

What is the primary purpose of this space? Family time and entertaining guests.

1. Style Preferences

Do you have a preferred interior style? Modern with cosy elements.

Are there any specific colours you love or want to avoid? Love neutral tones with accents of blue and green; avoid red and orange.

What is your least favourite colour? Red.

Are there any interior styles you dislike or want to avoid? Overly minimalistic or industrial styles.

1. Functional Needs

What key activities will take place in this space? Watching TV, reading, hosting small gatherings.

How many people should the seating accommodate? 6-8 people.

Do you have storage requirements? Yes, hidden storage for books, toys, and other items.

1. Users of the Space

Who will primarily use this space? Adults, children, or both? Both.

What are the ages of the users? Adults (30s), children (5 and 7 years old). Are there any specific accessibility requirements? No.

Do you have pets? Yes, a dog.

How often do you entertain guests in this space? Weekly.

Are there any hobbies or activities that the family enjoys in the living room? Watching movies, reading, and playing board games.

What are the professional backgrounds of the main users? Sarah is a teacher, and John is an architect.

1. Budget and Timeline

What is your budget for the project? £10,000.

Do you have a deadline for completion? 3 months.

1. Additional Comments

Any specific furniture or decor pieces to include? A family heirloom oak coffee table. Anything else we should know? The space should be pet-friendly for our dog.



Fig 2. Pexels (nd) Interior Designer talking to clients

# Translating the Questionnaire into a Client

Brief

Translating a questionnaire into a client brief is the process of organising raw information into a structured document that guides the design process. The goal is to synthesise the client’s responses, prioritise their needs, and clearly define the objectives for the project. Each piece of information from the questionnaire is analysed to understand the underlying requirements and how they relate to the design. This involves:

1. Identifying Key Goals: Highlighting the primary purpose of the space and how it will function for the users.
2. Defining Style Preferences: Pinpointing specific styles, colours, and aesthetic elements to ensure alignment with the client’s vision.
3. Assessing Functional Needs: Ensuring the space supports the intended activities and accommodates all users comfortably.
4. Considering User Profiles: Taking into account the demographics, lifestyle, and preferences of the people using the space.



Fig 3. Pexels (nd) Women Pointing Fingers on Material Samples

1. Budget and Timeline Constraints: Outlining the financial and time limitations to keep the project realistic and achievable.

By following these steps, the designer creates a brief that serves as both a blueprint for the project and a communication tool between the client and the design team.

## Client Brief for Sarah and John Smith Project Overview:

The project involves redesigning the living room at 14 Rosewood Lane, London. This space will serve dual purposes: family use and entertaining guests.

## Style and Aesthetic:

The clients prefer a modern design with cosy elements. Neutral tones with accents of blue and green are desired, while red and orange are to be avoided. They dislike overly minimalistic or industrial styles. The design must integrate a family heirloom oak coffee table.

## Functional Requirements:

The living area should comfortably accommodate 6-8 people, with adequate seating options. Hidden storage for books, toys, and miscellaneous items is essential. The design should also be pet-friendly for their dog.

## Users of the Space:

The living room will be used by both adults and children. The layout needs to comfortably accommodate guests, and the design should support hobbies such as watching movies, reading, and playing board games. The users include Sarah, a teacher, and John, an architect, along with their dog and their two children (ages 5 and 7).

## Budget and Timeline:

The total budget for the project is £10,000, and it must be completed within three months.



Fig 4. Pexels (nd) Women Talking while the Man is Pointing his Finger on the Hanging Card.

# Step 3: Analysing the Client Brief

Analysing the client brief is where the designer begins to both interpret and prioritise the information provided by the client. This step involves examining each element of the brief to extract actionable insights and identify design opportunities. By focusing on the functional, aesthetic, and emotional aspects of the project, the designer ensures the outcome aligns with the client’s vision while addressing practical requirements. Key considerations include:

1. Reviewing the space’s intended use and how the layout will facilitate this. 2. Understanding the preferred style and avoiding elements the client dislikes.

3. Balancing functionality with visual appeal to create a harmonious environment.

4. Aligning the design with the client’s budget and timeline constraints.

A systematic approach to analysing the client brief helps uncover any potential challenges early, enabling the designer to propose creative solutions and ensure a seamless execution.

Breaking the brief into actionable insights ensures all aspects of the project are addressed.

## Understanding the Space:

The living room is a multi-functional space for family and guests. Ensure the layout allows for fluid movement within the space.

## Identifying Style Preferences:

Focus on creating a balance between modern and cosy.

Use neutral colours for walls and furniture, incorporating blue and green accents through cushions, rugs, or artwork.

Avoid bold statements in red and orange to adhere to the clients’ preferences. Avoid overly minimalistic or industrial styles as per the clients’ dislikes.

## Functional Design Elements:

Prioritise comfortable seating arrangements to cater to family and guests.

Include multi-functional furniture with hidden storage, such as ottomans or built-in units. Choose durable, pet-friendly materials for upholstery and flooring, such as stain-resistant fabrics and scratch-proof wood or laminate.

## Budget Management:

Allocate funds for key investments such as quality seating, storage solutions, and statement decor.

Opt for cost-effective finishes and accessories to stay within budget while maintaining style.

## Timeline Planning:

Create a project timeline that includes milestones for design approval, procurement, and installation to meet the three-month deadline.

## Personal Touches:

Incorporate the heirloom oak coffee table as a central feature in the living room. Consider displaying family photos or custom artwork to make the space uniquely theirs.



Fig 4. Pexels (nd) Man in grey suit talking to clients https://[www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-](http://www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-) gray-suit-jacket-talking-to-clients-7641866/ .

Creating a detailed and accurate client brief is fundamental to the success of any interior design project. The brief serves as the cornerstone of the entire process, ensuring the designer fully understands the client’s needs, preferences, and constraints. By starting with a comprehensive questionnaire, designers can gather the critical details that inform every design decision.

When a brief is well-crafted, it not only aligns the designer and client but also acts as a roadmap, minimising misunderstandings and setting clear expectations. This reduces the risk of costly revisions and ensures the final design meets the functional and aesthetic goals outlined at the outset.

Moreover, a thorough client brief allows the designer to anticipate potential challenges, propose innovative solutions, and tailor the space to the unique lifestyle and personality of the users. It bridges the gap between vision and execution, ensuring the end result is a harmonious blend of form, function, and personalisation.

Investing time and effort into developing and analysing a client brief is the cornerstone of every successful interior design outcome. It empowers both the designer and client to work collaboratively, fostering a shared understanding and paving the way for a beautifully realised space that truly feels like home.