# Budget

Because every job is different and different clients have different requirements, depending on their taste, needs, and preferences, deciding how to allocate parts of a budget to sourcing materials etc., has no hard and fast rule. The interior designer will therefore need to tailor the budget to suit the client.



Fig 1. Unsplash (n.d.) Working within a budget is a key skill in interior design

Imagine you have had your initial consultation with the client, they have agreed to hire you and between you, you have established what needs to be done. Now, you need to get an idea of their budget. Sometimes clients are hesitant to divulge an actual figure. This only works if they have an unlimited budget and are willing to allow you free reign. However, this is seldom the case so in order to prevent wasting hours sourcing and working out a design that is out of their budget, you must get a ball-park figure. The best way to do this is to explain and reassure them that whatever their budget is, this is fine, but that there is a huge variance in what is available on the market. For example, if you are designing a kitchen let the client know that kitchens can range from €4k/£3.5 to well above €75 k/£70k.

Once you have established a rough guide as to what your client is willing to spend, it is important to give them a cost for your services. You must be clear and you must explain what exactly you will be offering for the money they will be paying you.

When it comes to budgeting for the project, it is usually a good idea to list all the items you will need to include. This process should happen after you have developed a Design Concept that your clients will have approved. As a rule of thumb it is probably better to start with the items that are likely to remain in place for the longest period before being upgraded. First comes the flooring, then the furniture, then curtains and blinds, next is generally paint colour and decorating, and finally the accessories. This is a very basic technique and will obviously vary from client to client but it is a good starting point.

Different jobs will require different degrees of budgeting and it is up to you, the interior designer, to manage it. This is where the leg-work begins. You will have the approved design concept to implement, so now you need to source materials that will fit into your client’s budget. Over time you will quickly identify where to shop to get the best deals etc. but, unfortunately, at the start it's just plain, old fashioned, hard work!

Below is a basic list of all the elements you need to take into account when you are working out your budget; the list is not definitive and varies with each job but will give you a good idea of how to start.

## Flooring

From your own survey or from plans, roughly work out the square meters of the area that you need to cover. For example, a 3m x 4.5m room will require 13.5m square metres of flooring. So, if the tiles you are contemplating are €25/£21 per square metre, then the cost of the tiles will be €337.50/£280. However, it is always a good idea to order 10-20% extra materials to cover possible installation damages, and for your client to have for future maintenance if needed. This means the suggested quantity is rounded up to €350/£294, or you can add the amount needed for the extra materials.



Fig 2. Pexels (n.d.) Example of flooring

In general, flooring/tiling companies will usually work out how many tiles and how much grouting you will need and should give you a written quotation. However, it is a good idea to have already calculated the costs at an approximation for yourself. To give you a rough idea of your costs, you can use the same principals for all types of flooring. Don’t forget to price the following elements when working out your flooring budget:

1. Tiles: Labour, materials, underlay (underfloor heating, insulation, leveling the floor etc.)
2. Carpet: Labour, material, underlay (insulation, leveling, etc.)
3. Wooden Flooring: Labour, material, underlay
4. Engineered hardwood and Luxury Vinyl Tiles (LVTs): Labour, material, underlay (underfloor heating, insulation, leveling etc.)

## Furniture

This is usually quite straight forward. The price of the furniture plus delivery and sometimes assembly charges.

* Furniture
* Delivery
* Assembly

## Curtains and Blinds

Measure your window openings and decide whether you are going to use curtains, blinds or both.

* Are the curtains going to be full length or short?
* Will they hang on poles or rails?
* Tiebacks?
* Are you going to have Roman blinds, Venetian blinds or roller blinds?



Fig 3. Pexels (n.d.) Example of window blinds

In time you will develop the ability to quickly estimate the quantity of fabric you will need, however, it is always a good idea to ask a professional to come and measure for you and give you a specific quote.

Things to consider:

* Curtains / blinds
* Fabric cost of blinds
* Lining fitting
* Makeup cost (Romans need the same as curtains, i.e. lining
* Poles / tracks / fabric
* Fitting

Don’t forget to get a price from your fitter for measuring professionally as well as hanging the curtains and blinds.

## Bathrooms

Make a list of all items to be included here including. toilet, basin, shower, mirror, bath, panels, shower tray and doors, mirror etc. And remember that fittings are extra. Use the same costing method for the wall tiling as you do for floor tiles. Again, remember to trust the professionals and ask the tiling company to give you a detailed quotation for all materials necessary. Discuss with your client who is providing the plumber. If you are sourcing a plumber to install the units, get a written quotation for carrying out the work.

## Kitchens

Most kitchen companies will supply you with drawings and costings for the installation of a new kitchen. Sometimes you will be charged a design fee by the company – especially from the more expensive kitchen companies. This fee is often deductible if you go ahead and order from them, but don’t forget to include this fee in your budget, so that you are not out of pocket if the client doesn’t go with it.



Fig 4. Pexels (n.d.) Kitchen appliances

With cash and carry kitchen companies, you will need to have the kitchen fitted as well, so get the names of fitters and get a few quotations for fitting the units. Appliances are extra so allow for them, especially if you are using integrated products. Do not forget the following items: cooker, hob, fridge, dishwasher, extractor fan and fittings.

Allow sufficient funds for your splash back – this could be tiles, an extension of the work top, PVC panelling, stainless steel etc.

## Painting and Decorating

You will almost always be involved in this aspect of the design. Get the decorator to measure up the property early on in the job and give you a written quotation for carrying out the work. If you are planning on using more expensive paint products, such as Farrow & Ball, Zoffany or Laura Ashley, then you will need to allow extra for this, but discuss this with your client at the start.

If you have chosen to use a wallpaper in your project, you can calculate the quantities by following the guidelines given by the particular wallpaper company. You can also ask your decorator to estimate the quantity of wallpaper you will need - a shop will usually give you a rough idea such as: you normally get 4 drops per roll on a standard wall, however, this varies when you have a patterned paper.

## Fireplace

This is simply the cost of the fireplace including: Hearth, surround, inset and mantelpiece. Ask the supplier if fitting is included – it usually is – however they may not remove the existing fireplace so take that into consideration.



Fig 5. Pexels (n.d.) Example of a fireplace

## Lighting

Replacing existing light fixtures and fittings must always be carried out by a professional electrician. Again, ask for a written quotation for carrying out the work of replacing whatever fittings you are changing and, if necessary, the wall fittings as well. If you are changing the location of the light fittings, keep in mind that the electrician will need to re-wire the property, which will add to the overall cost of the project.

## Accessories

Accessories are usually last on the list and difficult to budget for, largely because they are in the final phase of styling the project. It is advised to make a list of the most essential accessories and allocate a figure to them.

Accessories to consider, depending on the style of the project, are:

* Rugs
* Lamps
* Art work
* Scatter cushions
* Plants

Then allow yourself some flexibility at the end so you can pick up pieces such as:

* Candles
* Photo frames
* Ornaments

It is advised to leave these until last so that you know how much money you have left.

This is a good time to think about extras that may crop up such as:

* Skip Hire – to remove old furniture, fireplace, kitchen units etc.
* Cleaning – Especially if it is a turn-key project you will need to hire a professional cleaning contractor.

As you can see, budgeting is all about being organised from the outset. The more projects you experience, the easier budgeting will become, but take the time at the start to draw out a spread sheet or list of all the different elements of your design. This can then be used for every job you undertake. And, last but not least, always allow a bit extra for unforeseen expenses. Your client will be much happier if you come in under budget, rather than over budget,

# Timeline

When working within a set timeline, interior designers must manage many aspects of the design process to ensure the project stays on schedule and meets client expectations. There are a few key things you will need to consider.



Fig 6. Pexels (n.d.) A successful project relies on good time management

## Planning and Sourcing

The importance of clear project planning cannot be overstated. You will have to develop a detailed project timeline, including all phases of the project such as concept development, sourcing, purchasing, construction, and installation. Set realistic milestones and deadlines for each stage, making it easier to monitor progress and adjust if needed. Factor in lead times for ordering materials, furniture, and accessories. Custom-made items may take longer, so plan accordingly. Depending on the nature of the project, it may be a good idea to opt for items that are readily available or have a guaranteed delivery window, and ensure that all suppliers, contractors, and vendors understand the timeline and can deliver on schedule. Finally, to avoid backorders and delivery delays, place orders for key materials and furniture early in the process.

## Project Coordination and Supervision

If you have agreed with the client that you will be managing the installation process and project managing, then you will need to work closely with contractors and subcontractors (e.g. carpenters, painters, electricians) to ensure they are available at the right times and that their work aligns with the schedule. You will also need to make regular site visits to monitor progress, and troubleshoot issues. This will also ensure everything is on track and can help avoid delays.

## Design Revisions

Be prepared for possible changes or revisions from the client. It is a good idea to think about how many revisions the quote you gave your client includes. In some cases, it may save you time if you give a limit of two revisions and make it very clear that if they require further revisions these come at an additional cost. Build time into the schedule for design changes, but limit them once the project is underway to avoid delays. Make sure you listen to your client and provide clear guidance and explanations so that they can make well informed decisions in the initial stages of approving the designs. The last thing you want is a client who changes their mind after the installation of a design.

## Permits and Approvals

If an interior design project requires building permits, landlord approvals, or other legalities, allocate time for the unpredictable approval process. Depending on the government requirements, these are usually submitted by an Architect or a Civil Engineer. To avoid delays during inspections or approvals, ensure your design complies with local building codes and regulations. You can find all the necessary information on these on Government websites. Lastly, make sure you comply with local building requirements as sometimes these change even within a country, depending on the geographical area the project is located.

## Contingency Plans

As an interior designer, it’s important to anticipate delays. Ensure to build a buffer into the schedule for unexpected delays, such as material shortages, weather impacts (for exterior work), or contractor issues. It is usually suggested that an additional 14 days is added on to your expected delivery date, or an additional 10% of the time predicted, if you are working on a very large scale project. Try to work on your problem-solving skills, and quickly adapt to unexpected changes as this will help to keep the project on track.

## Quality Control

While time is critical, quality should not be compromised, so avoid rushing any phase of the design process. It is standard practice to carry out a “snag list”, once something is installed. So for example, if you are working on a kitchen installation, once the carcasses are installed, ask the fitter can you review their work and make a list of any flaws or faults. Discuss any faults with the fitter and ask them to rectify these before they proceed. This practice will prevent any further faults that could potentially result in more repair work. You can also carry out one final “snag list” before you hand over the project, but this method may make the process of rectifying the snags a little more timely.

Final Inspections

Schedule final checks to ensure that all aspects of the project meet the design standards and client’s expectations before finalising.