

How to Find the Right

Architect.

Your guide to choosing the right partner for your home plus **15** essential questions to ask before you decide.

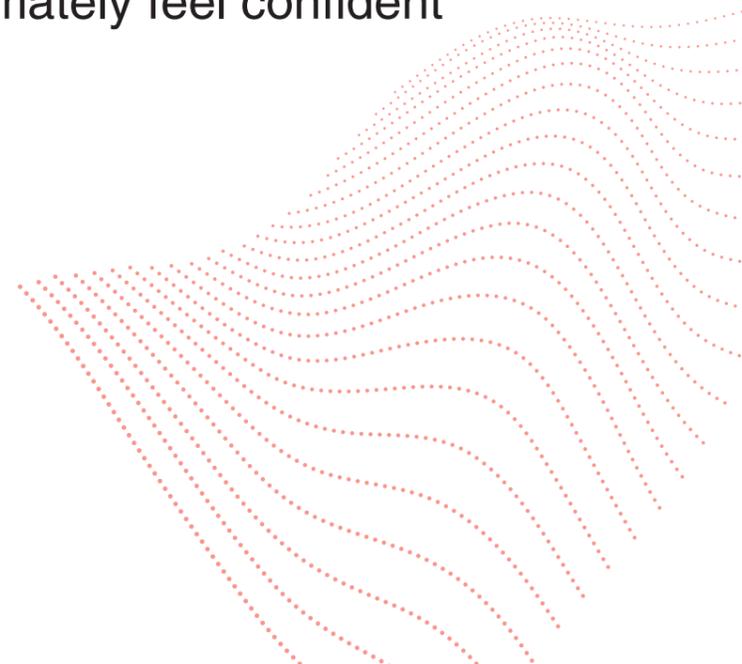


Start with the Right Partner

Choosing the right architect is a big decision. Your home is not only a reflection of your day-to-day living but it also holds your future memories.

The right architect won't just design a beautiful space. They should help make the entire experience feel simpler, clearer and (dare we say it?) even enjoyable, so they should feel like a good fit, a partner.

To help you find the right one for you, we've pulled together this guide to help you ask the right questions, look for the right signs, and ultimately feel confident you're in good hands.



WHAT IS A RIBA CHARTERED FIRM? *

A RIBA Chartered Practice is an architectural firm that has been accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). This accreditation signifies that the practice meets high standards of professional conduct, design quality, and client service. It indicates a commitment to ethical and technical excellence in architecture, and provides assurance to clients that they are working with a reputable and well-managed firm

Step 1: Check the Essentials

Before diving into style or ideas, make sure the basics are in place:

Are they ARB registered?

In the UK, the title "architect" is protected by law only those registered with the ARB (Architects Registration Board) can legally use it. This ensures they meet the required standards of education, training and conduct.

Do they have experience in your type of project?

Not all architects specialise in the same things. Some focus on large commercial schemes, others on new builds or rural barns. If you're planning a London terrace renovation, for instance, look for someone who knows how to work creatively within tight plots and planning rules.

Is their aesthetic aligned with yours?

You don't have to be in love with everything in their portfolio, but it should show a sensitivity to materials, light, and flow that resonates with you. Trust your instinct here.

Are they experienced locally?

Especially in cities like London, local knowledge matters. Familiarity with borough planning departments, party wall rules, and conservation policies can save you time and stress down the line.

Step 2: Meet the Architects

Here are some easy confidence-building questions that help reveal what working together might actually feel like. Don't rush this part. It's as much about chemistry and values as credentials.

15 Questions You Should Ask Prospective Architects

1. How do you approach understanding what a client wants, even if they don't quite know yet?

Great architects are great listeners. Look for someone who asks thoughtful questions and takes time to understand not just what you want your home to look like, but how you hope to live in it. It's okay if your brief is still forming because the right architect will help you shape it.

2. Can you show us some projects that are similar in scale, scope or context to ours?

This question not only helps you understand if they have worked on similar projects but also understand if they have experience in dealing with any challenges like working in conservation areas, tight urban plots, or within a particular budget range. Don't worry if no two projects are identical, the real key to this one is what matters is how they approached the constraints and opportunities.

3. Who will we be working with day-to-day?

It's common for the person you meet in early conversations to step back once the project begins. That's not a bad thing as many practices, like ours, do this to ensure you're paired with an architect whose time, skills, and experience are the best fit for your project. Still, you'll want to know who your ongoing contact will be and how the handover is managed.



4. How do you balance big ideas with the practical stuff like budget, timeline and permissions?

Design is exciting, but there's also a project to deliver. Look for someone who gets just as energised by problem-solving and constraints as by beautiful detailing. They should help guide your decisions in a way that balances ambition with buildability and practicality in mind.

5. What's your philosophy when it comes to sustainability or retrofitting?

Whether this is important to you or not, it's good to understand their point of view about these things. Can they help make your home more energy-efficient? Do they stay up-to-date with building regs or low-carbon materials? Are they realistic about cost and feasibility?





Questions

6. How do you help set and adhere to budget?

The right architect won't shy away from money conversations. Instead, they should help you shape a budget that reflects what you want to do and guide your decisions as the project evolves. Some may build in early cost checks or bring in specialists for this either way, early transparency is critical to avoid compromises down the line.

7. What's your fee structure, and what's included or not included?

Some practices charge by stage, others as a percentage of the build cost. Either way, it's important to know exactly what's covered from design work and planning submissions to site visits or project admin and what might come as an extra.

8. What's your process for working out costs early on?

Some practices offer cost estimates during early design, using benchmarks or advice from builders. Others go further and offer live detailed costing alongside design development. This can really help you stay in control and avoid getting attached to ideas that aren't feasible.

9. How do you handle planning permission and building regulations?

Most architects manage this as part of their role, but it's worth asking how experienced they are with the process especially in your borough or type of home. Do they know how to engage with planners constructively? What's their success rate?

10. Do you offer design only, or also manage the build?

Some architects do design, others offer full project oversight or construction services. If they don't build in-house, ask how they stay involved during construction and how they help keep things on track.

11. What's your communication style?

This is a personal one. Some people like weekly check-ins; others prefer a visual update by email. The best relationships are built when you both understand each other's preferences from the start.

12. How do you manage decisions especially when they feel overwhelming?

Decision fatigue is real. The right architect will have a clear process for guiding you showing you options at the right time, with the right level of detail, and helping you weigh up pros and cons without pressure.

13. What's your process for helping us imagine the design before we commit?

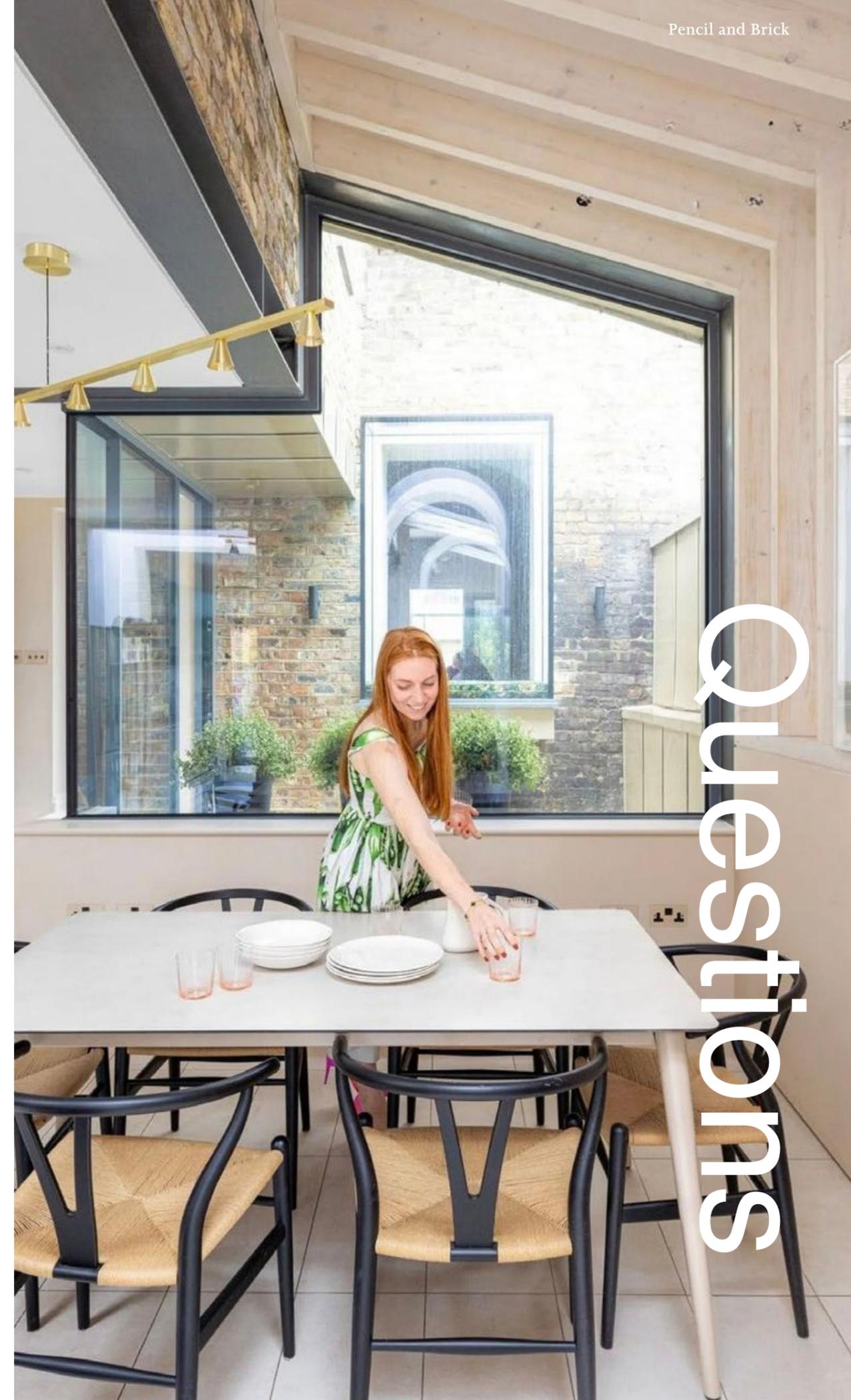
Do they use hand sketches, 3D models, renders, or physical samples? Good architects help you 'see' your future space so you can make the big decisions confidently.

14. If something unexpected happens, how do you help resolve it?

Every project has curveballs. The question here is: do they sound like someone who stays calm under pressure, communicates clearly, and works constructively with builders or consultants to find solutions?

15. Can we speak to one or two past clients?

Most good architects will be happy to connect you with someone they've worked with. Previous clients can offer honest insights about communication, process and what it really felt like to go through the journey with them.



Questions



Pencil and Brick

Step 3: What to Notice Beyond the Answers

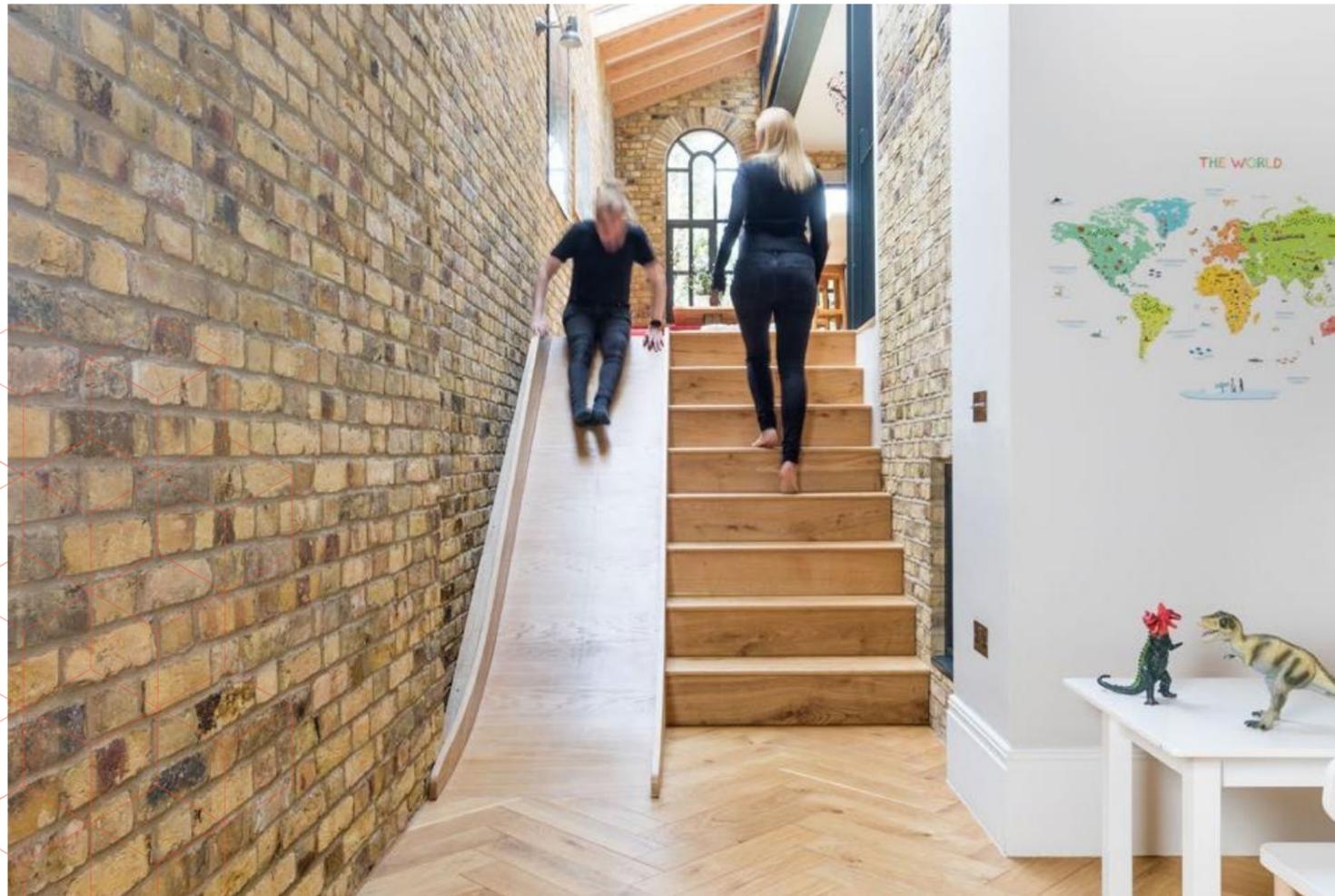
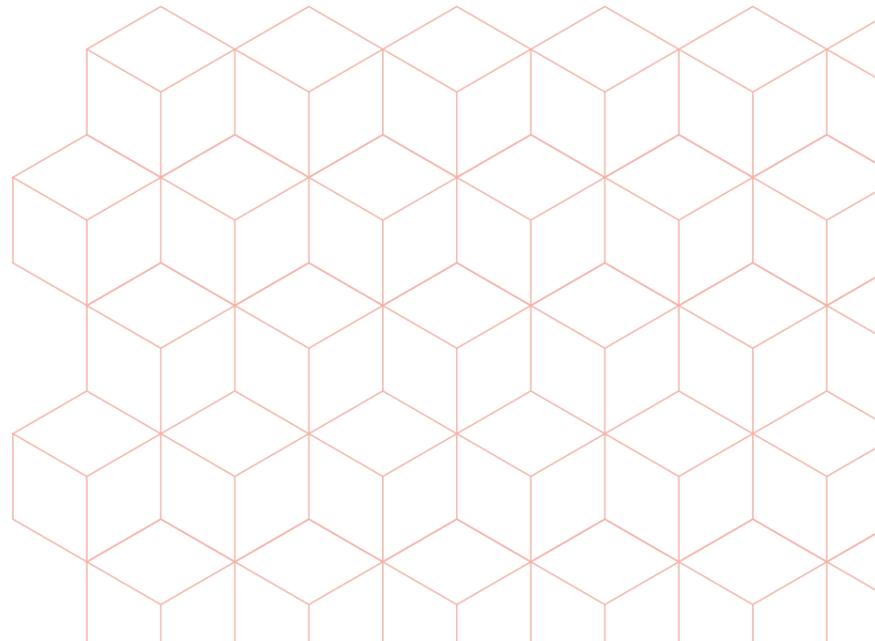
Sometimes, what's not said matters just as much as what is.

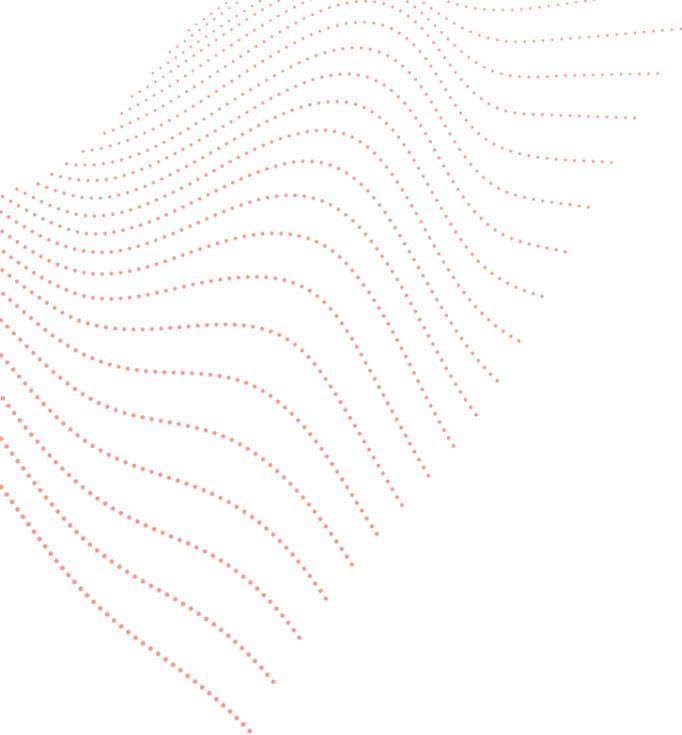
Here's what to look out for:

- Do they seem genuinely interested in how you want to live?
- Do they listen well, or rush to show you their ideas?
- Do they speak in a way that's clear and easy to understand?
- Do they feel open to collaboration or set in their ways about how to do things?



Don't worry if you're not 100% sure yet. This is a relationship. The right one will make you feel heard, respected, and supported.





Final Thoughts

Renovating a home can be exciting and transformative but also full of unknowns. Whether you're planning an ambitious extension, loft conversion, a full retrofit or simply reshaping how you live, the architect you choose should be more than just technically skilled.

So take your time. Ask the questions that matter to you. And above all choose someone who makes you feel confident and comfortable.

Good luck on your house transformation journey!



A modern kitchen and dining area. The kitchen features coral-colored upper cabinets with glass doors and teal lower cabinets. A terrazzo backsplash is visible above the countertop, which holds a white teapot, a black kettle, and a wooden cutting board. A stainless steel oven with a blue and white checkered towel hanging on its handle is on the right. In the foreground, a wooden dining table is set with a brass candelabra holding yellow and teal candles, a small vase with white flowers, and a teal bowl. The floor is made of light-colored wood in a herringbone pattern.

We're an award-winning, architect-led design and build practice specialising in beautifully crafted London homes. Our mission is to make ambitious renovations simpler, smarter, and more joyful by uniting architectural design and construction in one seamless, collaborative journey. We believe great homes come from strong partnerships, built on trust, clarity and creativity. That means listening carefully, offering honest advice, and guiding you through every step from that first sketch to final tile.

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