THE ESSENTIAL PRE-BUILD GUIDE

7 EXPENSIVE MISTAKES TO AVOID BEFORE YOU BUILD

Plan with clarity. Build with confidence.





A NOTE FROM FIONA

Welcome — your considered home starts here

Building a home is exciting, but the decisions arrive quickly — often before you know what will matter most. A beautiful result begins well before colours and finishes. It begins with a plan that supports the way you actually live.

This guide will help you recognise seven costly missteps before they become variations, compromises or daily frustrations. Use it to slow the process down, ask better questions and make each choice with intention.

My hope is that you feel informed, calm and confident as your home takes shape.

WARMly,

Fiona
Sand + Linen Design Studio

YOUR GUIDE

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MISTAKE 01

Choosing style before function

WHY IT COSTS YOU

A look-led plan can create awkward circulation, undersized rooms and beautiful spaces that fail under everyday life.

DO THIS FIRST

Map your routines: arrivals, school bags, groceries, laundry, entertaining, quiet time and future needs. Let these patterns shape the plan before you define the aesthetic.

FIONA'S TIP

Before saving inspiration images, write down how you want each room to feel and function on an ordinary Tuesday.



MISTAKE 02

Accepting the builder's floor plan without review

WHY IT COSTS YOU

Standard plans are designed for broad appeal, not your site, furniture, habits or priorities. Changes made after contracts can become expensive variations.

REVIEW THE PLAN

Test orientation, natural light, privacy, sightlines, room proportions, door swings and the journey from garage to kitchen. Question every corridor and leftover corner.

FIONA'S TIP

Have the plan reviewed before engineering and selections are locked. Early lines are far cheaper to move than walls.



MISTAKE 03

Underestimating storage

WHY IT COSTS YOU

Storage added later is rarely seamless and often steals usable floor area. Clutter then competes with the calm, resolved home you imagined.

PLAN BY CATEGORY

List what must live in every zone — appliances, linen, cleaning tools, luggage, toys, technology and outdoor gear. Include internal fittings, not just cupboard shells.

FIONA'S TIP

Allocate a home for the awkward items first: vacuum, ironing board, bins, suitcases and the everyday drop zone.



MISTAKE 04

Making selections in isolation

WHY IT COSTS YOU

A tile, benchtop or paint colour can look beautiful alone but feel disconnected when installed beside every other finish.

BUILD ONE STORY

Create a whole-home palette and review large samples together in natural and artificial light. Repeat a small number of materials to create visual rhythm and reduce decision fatigue.

FIONA'S TIP

Photograph every approved sample together and keep the image on your phone for showroom appointments.

MISTAKE 05

Forgetting about furniture



WHY IT COSTS YOU

Rooms can meet minimum dimensions and still fail once sofas, stools, tables, rugs and circulation are drawn at real scale.

FURNISH THE PLAN

Place key pieces before finalising walls, windows, power points and lighting. Check clearances, television viewing, bedside access and where floor lamps or consoles need power.

FIONA'S TIP

Draw furniture to scale — masking tape on the floor is a wonderfully honest test of proportion.



MISTAKE 06

Following trends instead of timeless design

WHY IT COSTS YOU

Highly specific trends can date quickly and encourage costly replacement of permanent elements.

CHOOSE WITH LONGEVITY

Keep architecture, joinery and hard finishes restrained and authentic. Add personality through lighting, art, textiles and smaller details that are easier to evolve.

FIONA'S TIP

Ask: would I still choose this without seeing it repeatedly online? If yes, it may be personal — not merely popular.



MISTAKE 07

Waiting too long to ask for help

WHY IT COSTS YOU

Design decisions are interconnected. Late advice can identify problems but may arrive after drawings, budgets or orders are committed.

BRING EXPERTISE FORWARD

A designer can align planning, selections, lighting, joinery and furniture before the build gathers momentum — protecting both the concept and the budget.

FIONA'S TIP

The best time to engage a designer is before plans are final. The next best time is before selections begin.



A MORE CONSIDERED PROCESS

Designer tips for a calmer build

START WITH THREE PRIORITIES

Choose the three outcomes that matter most — perhaps natural light, effortless entertaining and concealed storage. Use them to resolve competing decisions.

MAKE DECISIONS IN LAYERS

Work from plan and proportions, to fixed finishes, to lighting and joinery, then furniture and styling. Each layer should support the last.

KEEP ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Maintain a dated schedule of selections, product codes, finishes, quantities, lead times and approvals. Confirm verbal changes in writing.

PROTECT A CONTINGENCY

Allow room for site surprises and meaningful upgrades. A calm reserve is more useful than spending every dollar on day one.

BEFORE YOU SIGN OR SELECT

Pre-build planning checklist

- [ ] Our floor plan reflects our daily routines and future needs.
- [ ] Orientation, natural light, privacy and key views have been reviewed.
- [ ] Furniture is drawn to scale and circulation clearances work.
- [ ] Storage is allocated by category, including awkward items.
- [ ] Power, data and lighting align with furniture and joinery.
- [ ] All finishes have been viewed together in relevant light.
- [ ] Wet-area details, niches, tapware and set-outs are documented.
- [ ] Selections include product codes, quantities and lead times.
- [ ] Variations and approvals are confirmed in writing.
- [ ] We have retained a realistic contingency allowance.
- [ ] A designer has reviewed the plan before major commitments.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A beautiful home is a sequence of good decisions.

The most expensive mistakes are rarely about one wrong tile or tap. They happen when decisions are made without a clear framework — or when the right questions are asked too late.

Give yourself permission to pause, test and refine. Thoughtful planning will not remove every surprise, but it will help you spend with purpose and create a home that supports your life for years to come.

CLARITY BEFORE COMMITMENT.

That is where considered design begins.

MAKE IT YOURS

Notes & decisions

OUR THREE NON-NEGOTIABLES

QUESTIONS FOR OUR BUILDER OR DESIGNER

DECISIONS TO REVISIT

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

Let’s create a home that feels like you.

Sand + Linen Design Studio brings calm, cohesion and thoughtful expertise to the decisions that shape your home.

BOOK YOUR DESIGN CONSULTATION

