

House Beautiful

How Much Does It Cost to Hire a (Good) Interior Designer?

Hourly? Flat fee? What about trade discounts? Here's how it works.



Most people (probably) wouldn't fix their own deeply troubled toilet or perform a DIY root canal...because we recognize hiring a professional is well worth it. So why do many people still balk at the idea of bringing in a professional to design their homes? The answer may be that there's often a major lack of clarity when it comes to what designers charge, so you can feel like you're authorizing a major splurge before even being able to glance at the price tag. The truth is, when it comes to interior design, there's no *one* way of calculating the bill—some designers charge hourly, some a flat fee, some a markup on items they purchase for you (often using special, trade-only discounts). That said, there are several factors that come into play—considerations that can help you better understand just what hiring a professional might entail.

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Interestingly, Los Angeles firm JDP Interiors uses a flat fee plus purchasing fee model for furniture-only projects, but transitions to hourly plus purchasing fee when the project involves construction. **“Construction is always hourly because you never know what you are going to find when you open up walls,”** says the firm's founder Joyce Downing Pickens. “Once, we were on a quick remodel and when the contractor opened up the walls we realized the house was practically sliding down the mountain, and had to be reinforced so we were on that job much longer than we anticipated.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, hourly *didn't* work for Dallas based interiors and architecture firm Maestri Studio. “We used to have an hourly rate system for all projects, but I think it creates tension and sometimes even distrust with a client worrying about unknowns and surprise invoices,” says the firm’s creative director and owner, architect Eddie Maestri.