

6 mistakes to avoid when building



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Welcome to the first steps in creating your new home.

Like most things in life, knowledge is the key to success. When you embark upon the journey of building, you should look to give yourself as much knowledge and understanding as possible.

This booklet seeks to provide you with information that can assist you in gaining some of that important knowledge and it should alert you to the areas that you need to focus on. Building a new home or renovating your existing house is an exciting and fun stage of life, make sure that you know what you are doing and that you are working with people you can trust and the process should be enjoyable.

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welcome

We have prepared this guide after seeing so many people struggle with making the same mistakes over and over again.

Building can be one of the most liberating, wonderful, passionate and rewarding experiences you can have. To have a dream and to collaborate with wonderful people to turn that dream into a reality is extremely exciting. To be part of a process that can take a piece of land, effectively a blank canvas and create a home, a place for family, a place for creating memories is no small feat.

However, if you are venturing into the unknown, it can be a place full of traps. We have all heard of the building horror stories. As joyful as building can be, it is also one of the most expensive exercises you will ever undertake. It can be frustrating, lengthy, confusing and covered in red tape. Almost every person you come in contact with will have their hand out.

So what are the traps? What are the mistakes that new players make in this game? How can you best prepare yourself to ensure that the process is enjoyable and not painful?

In the following pages, you will discover the answers to these questions – and more.

I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

Sincerely yours,
Craig Taylor



01

The Brief

The most common mistake made when involved in a building project, is not to do enough planning at the beginning. The brief is an important document. It establishes, right at the very beginning of the project what you want in your building. Just like a business starts with their Mission Statement, the Brief is your house mission statement.

The Brief will set out;

- who the house is for, 2 people, a family, an extended family
- what you want in your house, e.g. how many bedrooms, bathrooms etc,
- how big you want your house and how big the rooms should be,
- what is the 'look' and the 'feel' of the house,
- are there any special elements to the house, and
- what is the budget for your house

The more detailed your brief is at the beginning of the project, the more focused you are on what it is you want. From that point on all of the decisions you have to make will be easier because you already have a clear vision. It also means that you will be in a much better position to provide directions and give instructions to others about what you want.

You can develop the brief on your own or you can work with your architect. An architect can be a great resource to use as they will have been through this process many times before and can assist you in understanding which decisions are the important ones and which ones are of less importance. They can also assist in answering some of those questions with you.

As builders often say, "measure twice, cut once". The brief is your "measure twice" moment. Another way to look at it was described by Benjamin Franklin, 'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail'.



02

Poor Planning

The great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "A doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines". Get it right! There are a million 'plan' drawing programs on the internet that anyone can download and start moving rectangles around on a sheet of paper, however this is not how you should go about planning your new house.

Buildings are three dimensional. Length, width and height. There are spatial relationships and connections. How the sunlight enters the building, where the breezes come from, where the views are. What does the space feel like when you enter the front door, is it dark and enclosed, is it open and light, is there a view in the distance that draws you into the house.

It is great to have an idea, to have a plan for what you think would be a great layout for your house. It can be a wonderful starting point for a discussion with your architect. But you don't want to be fixed on that plan. You don't want to get caught out down the track because you didn't listen to your architect's advice. Changes to the built structure will cost 50 times what they cost whilst they are still just lines on paper.

This is the stage where you need to start working with an expert, someone who does this every day of the week. There are a lot of elements that go into creating a great design and many of those elements can only be conceived at this stage of the process, so you want to be working with someone who has the skills to be able to visualise a concept that achieves the goals you set out in the brief.



03

Work with the Right People

You are one part of the equation, an extremely important part, but at the end of the day you are still just one part of the part of the jigsaw puzzle that must come together to create your new house.

You may need any of the following professionals or tradesmen;

- Architect
- Town Planner
- Landscape Architect
- Heritage Planner
- Structural Engineer
- Services Engineers
- Energy Consultant
- Pool Consultant
- Accessibility Consultant
- Land Surveyor
- Quantity Surveyor
- Solicitor
- Builder
- Carpenter
- Plumber
- Electrician

..... and on and on the list goes.

It is essential for a good outcome for your project, that you hire the right people. Make sure they have the necessary qualifications and experience to achieve the results you want. Take the time to get it right the first time. Money should not be the deciding factor – quite often, you get what you pay for!





You want to hire people that you have a connection with and will actually listen to you and importantly, people that you are willing to listen to.

Remember, these are all people who do this for a living and they can all have a positive impact on your house. It is your house, but they have the knowledge of how best to achieve it.

Quite often people will think they can save some money by doing some of the work themselves or by thinking that they can act as an owner builder for the project, even though they have no experience in building.

This is not a smart strategy. It is an expensive way of achieving 'on the job' training as a builder.

Appreciate that it will cost more to hire the right people to do the right jobs, but those people know how to do their jobs. That cost will be a lot less than the cost of having to rectify mistakes, when you make bad decisions.

04

BE REALISTIC WITH TIMEFRAMES

This is becoming a major problem within the industry. Reality television has become fast food entertainment. A major building sugar hit, where complete novices manage to spectacularly renovate houses in a matter of weeks right before your eyes. Kitchens materialise instantly, tiles are available at a moment's notice and tradesmen are sitting around waiting for your phone call – oh, and they are available at just the right price!

Smoke and mirrors maybe? Remember, this is television; it's not the real world. Just as every bachelor doesn't have twenty glamorous women fawning over him or groups of people don't magically get dropped onto deserted islands to fend for themselves before whittling themselves down to a single survivor, we need to be able to separate fiction from fantasy.

As they say, 'every good lie is based on the truth' and most building reality television programmes follow the building path, they just speed it up a little.

So what is the real story with timelines? Well, that depends on what you are doing. The first step is to go back to Item 01 The Brief. You should have figured out in your brief when you want the building work to finish.

Is there an important date that you are working toward; an anniversary, a birthday, a reunion or an important holiday like Christmas? Maybe there is no fixed or specific date that you must complete the work by, that's fine. You don't need to have a deadline. However, just because you don't have a deadline doesn't mean that you don't have a timeframe.

Determining how long the project should go for is something you should discuss with your architect. They can provide you with an outline timeframe for each stage of the project.





The architect can advise how long the design phase will take, this will be longer the more complicated and unusual the building.

The next phase is the approval process and this one is out of your control. Councils can give you an estimate on how long it is taking to assess applications, which is usually between 8 – 12 weeks, however there are any number of factors which can extend that process.

After you have gained an approval, you need your architect to prepare construction documents so you can go tender. The length of time required to prepare these documents depends on how large the project is, how detailed the information is and how you plan to engage the builder.

Once you have these documents, then you are ready to go to tender. This is normally a three to four week process where the builder's determine what it will cost to build your new house and the submit their bid to you so you can select the right builder.

Then it's time to start building. I'm afraid to tell you that it won't be completed by the next television advertisement break.

An important part of the builder's bid will be to provide you with the expected completion date. Sometimes this is more important than the tender price.

05

BE REALISTIC WITH COST

In your brief you figured out how much you want to spend. Now you need to understand how far that budget will stretch. 'Buying' a building is no different to buying clothes or a car or an appliance. You get what you pay for and there will always be someone out there who will offer you a great deal on a great product.

Remember, this will be the biggest purchase of your life and it is a purchase that you will have for a long time, so you don't want to be seduced into cutting corners.

One of the first areas that prospective home owners consider as a cost saving is on the design fees at the beginning of the project. This money doesn't appear to have real value because you aren't receiving a 'real object' for the money you have spent. As we discussed in Item 2 Poor Planning, the money spent at the beginning of the project will be the most efficient and effective money you will spend in the whole process.

Cutting corners on costs also applies to buying cheap materials and hiring lesser quality tradesmen. You may have saved money today, but you will be spending more money down the track on repairing defective work or replacing faulty equipment.

You need a contingency budget. Preferably you should set aside an additional 10% of the construction budget.

Why do I need that? I have an architect, I have a builder, why do I need to allow for something else? The reason is simple; there is always the chance of the unforeseen. It may be unknown ground conditions, it may be delays with suppliers, it may be materials that become unavailable and you need to select a more expensive option. It may be that during construction you decide to make a change or add to your building. Sometimes, it is as simple as 'stuff happens'. Whatever it is, you don't want to be at the limit of your budget and not to have the resources to continue.





So how much will it cost to build my building? The answer to that question is similar to 'how long is a piece of string'.

There are many factors that go into the cost of a building and the best advice is to ask an expert early in the process so that you have realistic expectations. Make sure that during the design and approval processes that you are checking on what the expected building cost is, to be sure that there has been an unexpected escalation.

You can talk with your architect or you can talk with a builder to gain a full understanding of what the expected costs of your building will be. We recommend using a quantity surveyor who is able to give you an accurate cost for all of the building elements. Their cost estimate allows you to understand what parts are expensive and where you can maximise your budget.

06

WHAT AM I GETTING?

We once worked on a project for a friend of mine. The project went through all of the usual processes; brief, design, approval, tender and then construction. When the project was completed, my friend came to me and thanked me for my efforts and then he said 'The building looks wonderful, I could never have imagined it was going to look like that'.

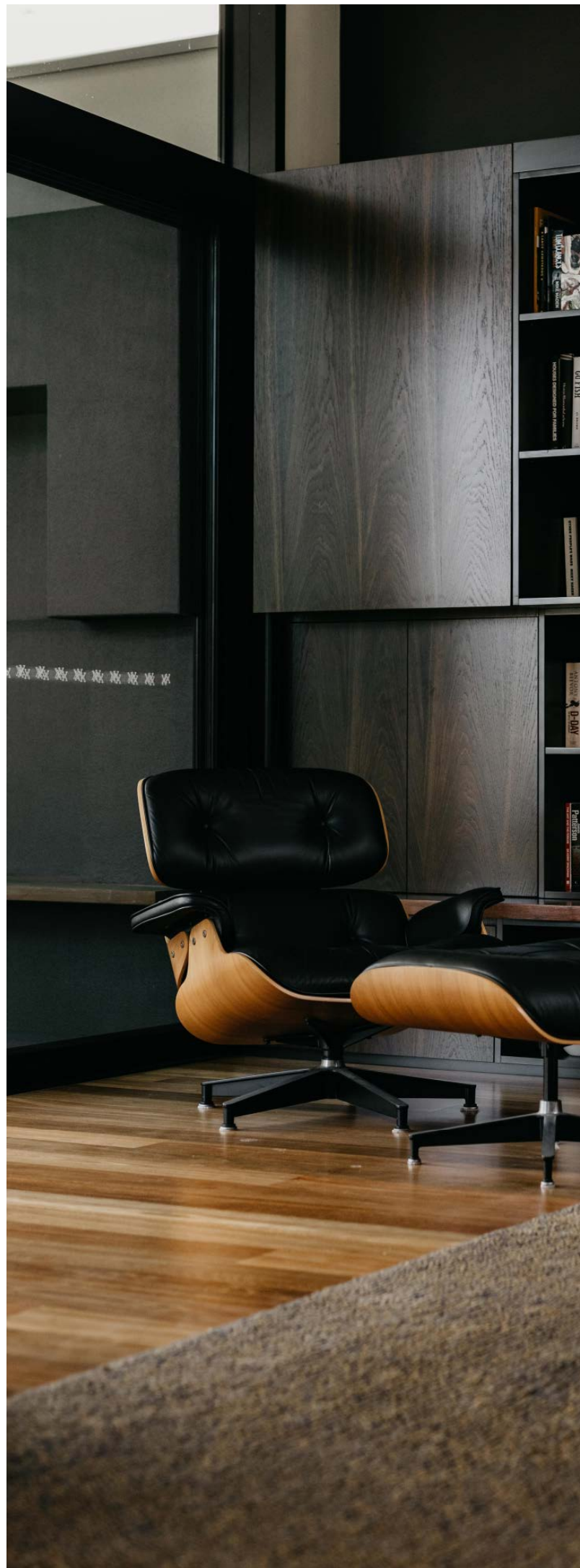
Something about the way he said it caught my attention, so I asked him what he meant by not having imagined the way the building looked? He replied that he didn't understand any of the drawings that I had showed him but he didn't want to say that, so he just kept saying that he was happy. He told me that he trusted me and wasn't worried.

It became apparent to me that we had taken for granted our ability to 'read' a drawing. As an architect we have many years of training to read drawings and be able to interpret them and visualise how those 2-dimensional lines translate into a 3-dimensional volume. However, not everyone else has that ability or training.

There is nothing wrong in not understanding a drawing. I can't read an x-ray, nor would I be able to follow the tax code, it isn't what I am trained to do. The mistake that you will make will be NOT speaking up when you don't understand something.

Ask, ask, ask. If you can't visualise a drawing, don't understand the specification, not sure what that material is, then ask. Your architect will be happy to explain it to all to you.

There are numerous ways in which an architect can show you how your building will look, in ways that you can understand more easily. Most architects can create a 3D computer model where you can walk through the building and get a feel for the spaces.





Alternatively, they can make a physical scale model, a real version of your building that you can pick up, turn around and peer into. Architects can draw a perspective drawing or draw an internal rendering of a space that can show you what it will look like.

There are many tools at the architect's disposal to help you understand what you getting. Trust is a wonderful thing, but don't be afraid to speak up and ask for clarification. You should have a clear understanding of what you are getting. It is important because your architect would love to have your opinion, so that together you can arrive at the best design for your house.

the next step...

Congratulations! You have now discovered some of the most common mistakes that people make when building a new house.

Unfortunately, I can't include every important piece of information about building new houses successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors.

To help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could doom your project to failure, we now offer a custom 'Needs & Options' review where we will identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options.

Typically, the 'Needs & Options' review saves my clients thousands of dollars and weeks of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To learn more about the 'Needs & Options' review, as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important to your project's success email me at info@redblue.com.au. If you are ready to talk now, call me at 612 9114 6767.

Best wishes for the success of your project,



Craig Taylor

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