

Different By Design

Find the right pro for the job

by Glenda Rogers

With the popularity of home-makeover shows, the delineations between professional designers, decorators and arrangers have become blurred. You may need help figuring out what types of jobs these pros can do and how you should go about selecting the one you need.

Before hiring a professional, it's wise to decide on your budget and your design or decorating needs. If your budget is relatively small, consider hiring **an arranger to bring a fresh new look to your home utilizing things you already own.** These experts come with varying levels of training and usually charge \$60 to \$100 an hour.

Arranging jobs require about four hours per room, during which a new layout for your room is created based on principles of design using your existing furnishings. The Interior Arrangement and Design Association (IADA) is a 10-year-old organization that maintains standards of professionalism and training for members. To search the IADA member listing, visit www.interiorarrangement.org.

If your budget is slightly higher, **a decorator can help you with new treatments for a room, like furnishings, paint, flooring and accessories.** A decorator might be the professional for you if you are looking at changing your daughter's room from, say, a My Little Pony theme to a rocking, cool teenager's room. They charge by the hour and usually require an initial consultation fee of about \$100.


Pattie Trumbull, owner of Design Inspirations, says the hourly cost of this type of service can vary greatly, depending

on how much of the legwork is taken on by the homeowner. Keep in mind, though, that decorators get wholesale pricing on furnishings and accessories and can actually save the client money in the end.

There are several professional organizations, including Certified Interior Decorators International (www.cidinternational.org) and the International Association of Professional Interior Decorators (www.iapo.net/decorate.html), that can offer guidance finding a professional decorator in your area.

Unlike arrangers and decorators, **an interior designer must hold a degree in design from a university and be trained in various subjects like drafting and furniture construction.**

They are familiar with building codes and can head professional teams including architects, designers and craftsmen.

Designers are the experts to call for room additions and major renovations, though they are capable of smaller decorating and arranging jobs as well. They typically charge an initial consultation fee of about \$250 and, as Angela Cain of Nouveauté says, "the cost of the job depends on the scope of the project." Grace Howard, administrator for the Georgia chapter of the American Society of Interior Design (ASID), recommends choosing an interior designer who is a degreed professional and member of ASID. To search ASID's designer listing, visit www.interiors.org. 

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STEPS FOR YOUR SEARCH

Get referrals: Friends, model homes and professional organizations are all good resources. Professional organizations often offer referral databases and hold their members to certain standards and business ethics. Narrow it down to three referrals.

Make a connection: This step is essential to establish a relationship with a potential designer/decorator. State your needs clearly and ask for references. If you're satisfied with their references and believe you can work well with the professional, set up the initial consultation.

Consultations: Meet with three designers/decorators. After these consultations, you will receive three proposals on which to base your decision. Remember, a good, honest relationship with the professional is key.