

## 5 COMMON MISTAKES WHEN SELECTING AN ARCHITECT

### 1. Seeking the Lowest Possible Fee

“How much do you charge?” is the number one question homeowners ask when seeking architectural services. However, the right question to ask is this: “How much will it cost to redesign, or worse, rebuild a project that was not done correctly or to your expectations?” The old adage “cheap is cheap” rings true when selecting an architect. Do not simply seek the best price, seek the best architect.

### 2. The Architect is Actually a Draftsman

Many times a client will hire someone to design their project, but since that individual is not a licensed professional, he or she will have a ‘friend’ sign and seal the plans for building department approval. This is a monumental mistake. In this scenario, the homeowner has no contractual relationship with the licensed professional, which leaves the homeowner with little recourse in the event there is a problem with the project. In addition, this practice is a violation of the state education law. Always ask for the architect’s state license number and verify that it is active and in good standing with the NYS Education Department Office of the Professions.

### 3. Not Setting a Payment Schedule, Paying a Large Sum Up Front

You probably already guessed it, but this mistake is a big one. Make sure the payment schedule is detailed in the contract, beginning with the amount to be paid upfront. Installment payments that start after the project begins should correspond to completed phases of the project. To ensure work is completed to your satisfaction, leave 10% to be paid once the final certificate of occupancy has been issued.

### 4. Expecting the Remodel to Pay for Itself

A word to the wise: your home’s value will not directly increase by the amount you spend on a remodel. Like children, remodeling projects don’t pay for themselves! However, you can expect to recoup some costs if you keep your project in line with [cost vs. value](#). Some projects do offer a higher return, so be sure to explain your project goals to your architect ahead of time. By working with an experienced architect, you will have the support of a professional who will guide you through a decision-making process that results in a functional, cost-effective living space that is tailored just for you.

### 5. Incomplete Research on an Architect

It is imperative that you do your research before you hire the architectural firm. When making your decision, focus on questions that require the firm to explain their ideas clearly and provide concrete evidence of their expertise. How much experience do they have in your type of project? Do they offer design and construction administration? Do they handle building department approvals or will a separate ‘expeditor’ be required? Do they have insurance coverage? You’re looking for a clear pattern of proficiency, proper credentials, and satisfied customers. You can also check Houzz.com, Google+, Angie’s List, and the Better Business Bureau for customer reviews and complaints.