

This kitchen by Cue & Co is the Waldemar, a handleless design shown here spray-painted in All White estate eggshell by Farrow & Ball and with oak splashback and Corian worktop. Kitchens are built to order in the west London workshop, starting at £35,000



GETTING STARTED

Buying a new kitchen can be a daunting prospect. From choosing the right style to finding a designer and developing a layout, there's a lot to take on board. Breaking it into small, manageable steps will make the process easier – consider it a journey, and give each stage all the time and care it needs.

1 LOOK AT THE SPACE
Do you simply want a place to prepare meals, or are you after an open-plan living area with enough room for a dining zone, and perhaps a snug, too? Is entertaining at the top of your list, or do you mainly use the space to rustle up family dinners? How much storage do you need? Have a good clear-out and get rid of anything you no longer use – be ruthless. Also, note down which aspects of your current kitchen work for you and those that don't.

3 THE FUN PART
Collect images that inspire you. Tear pages from magazines, scour kitchen company websites and use sharing sites such as Pinterest. Treasured objects, well-loved artworks or favourite pieces of furniture can be a great starting point for a theme or colour scheme. Don't worry about what you can and can't afford at this stage – it's all about honing your style. Visuals are an easy way to share ideas with your family and kitchen designer.

6 SET YOUR BUDGET
Be honest about your finances from the outset so that your designer can gauge where to invest and where to save. Ways to make a small budget stretch further include open shelving and generous pull-out storage – both cut down on the number of units you need to buy. When it comes to appliances, think about what you really use, and don't forget to budget for professional services such as a Gas Safe fitter, electrician or a tiler.

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2 MAKE A WISH LIST
Nail those must-haves; whether it's sleek Corian worktops, plenty of storage, or a statement island, have a clear idea of what you want. What type of cooker are you after, and with which functions? Which other appliances can't you live without? Make sure you've really got to grips with what you need and want before you even set foot in the showroom. The more information you can give, the better your design will be.

4 FIND A GOOD KITCHEN COMPANY
Flicking through magazines is a great way to find kitchen companies working across all budgets. Look at designer/retailer websites, too, as most have portfolios of previous projects – you'll find a handy list on our blog, Kitchensourcebook.co.uk. And, of course, pop into nearby showrooms. Word of mouth is still a great way to find a reliable company, with the certainty that the service has lived up to expectation.

7 ENJOY THE PROCESS
Once you've chosen your kitchen and found a designer who shares your vision, you're well on the way to creating a dream kitchen, so enjoy the next phase of fine-tuning the design. Most companies produce CAD drawings, which give a good idea of how the design will look, and this is the time to discuss worktops, sinks, taps, splashbacks and flooring. Proficient designers will be able to help with ideas for materials beyond the cabinetry.

9 COUNTDOWN TO COMPLETION
Unfortunately, refitting such an important part of your home comes with a certain amount of upheaval. A professional kitchen company will ensure the process is quick and as painless as possible, but it's worth having a contingency plan. Set up a basic cook station along with vital provisions elsewhere in the house. Plan to be away for the most disruptive stages, and try to relax and look forward to what's to come.



Cue & Co's Ebury kitchen has integrated handles and is shown here with stainless steel worktop and splashback, Carrara marble side panels and Gaggeneau appliances

5 DESIGNER TOUCH
To get the best from your new kitchen, call in a professional, be that a kitchen designer, interior designer or architect. Never underestimate what a trained eye can bring. As well as years of experience, ideas and know-how, they'll be able to offer solutions you won't have thought of. Add to this up-to-date knowledge of products, fixtures and fittings, plus the ability to source everything on your behalf, often getting good deals.

8 FITTING AND SERVICES
Shoddy workmanship can ruin a kitchen but decent installation will ensure even inexpensive units look amazing. Ask friends and family for recommendations, or go through a registered trade association, such as the Federation of Master Builders (fmb.org.uk). Larger projects may require planning permission or building regulations approval. Visit the website planningportal.gov.uk for useful advice.

10 FINISHING TOUCHES
The last additions are what make your kitchen your own. Add in an accent colour via striking accessories, subtly linking finishes – for instance, pair a timber breakfast bar with wooden stools, or upholster the seats with fabric that ties in with your splashback. Little details, such as your choice of handles, and artworks on the walls, can transform a scheme and add real personality.