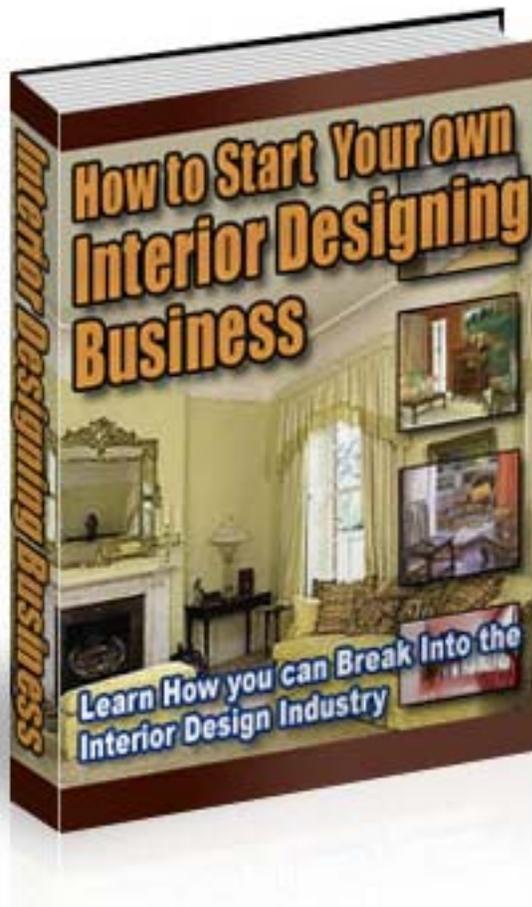


How to Start Your own Interior Designing Business



You can Break Into the Interior Design Industry!

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Introduction: How To Know If Interior Design Is Right for You

Have you ever seen a beautiful house or office building and wondered who did the work? Have you ever wished that you could do some of the work that you've seen elsewhere? Many people wonder what it would be like to be an Interior Designer, but they rarely ever go beyond thinking about it.

If you really want to know if Interior Design is right for, this book will be your comprehensive guide to the ins and outs of the business. In this book, you will learn what it takes to be an Interior Designer, what it costs to get certified, you will get all the techniques on how to get started, and much, much more.

An interior Designer is a consultant. You are there to beautify any particular environment as well as provide your clients with the service of explaining why you are recommending, and doing the things that your project will require. You must educate your client about interior design as well as design.

You have obviously given the idea of being an Interior Designer serious thought or you wouldn't be reading this. Of course, like most people, you are probably wondering whether or

not it is the right choice for you. I can guarantee you, that after you've read this, you will know for sure if Interior Design is the right career choice for your future.

Interior Design can be a very lucrative job choice for the right person. You might be wondering exactly what an Interior Designer does. It is really simple. An Interior Designer creates, organizes, and designs commercial and/or residential properties. Basically, an interior designer works with the interior of a particular space, such as rooms, offices, boardrooms, and various other internal spaces. Here is a list of some of the places that interior designers can work in.

- Hotels
- Banks
- Restaurants
- Stadiums
- Arenas

This doesn't seem very broad, but think of all of the other types of homes and businesses that I didn't mention. The possibilities are truly endless in this field. Interior Designers do more than just decorate a space. In some cases they can add extra rooms, design patios and gazebos, add or remove wall space, and they spend a great deal of time networking with people.

Interior Designers are responsible for creating a comfortable and relaxed space for their clients to live and/or work in. It is your duty to offer clients the best work that their needs, and budget can give. People put a great deal of trust in you, and you must reward that with the best final result possible.

What does it take to be an Interior Designer?

When trying to decide if Interior Design is right for you, it helps to know what that really means. Interior Design is not simply the profession that "makes rooms and places pretty"; it takes a little bit more than that. You need to know how to do some of the technical aspects of design also. Some of these technical things include:

Designing and reading blueprints: This is particularly for the projects that require a great change in the area's structure like wall removal etc. This is also required in order to make additional rooms, build gazebos, and adding extra rooms. You will need to draw up blueprints of the entire house or read the originals copies, so that you can do your job without causing much disturbance to the rest of the house or environment.

Environmental Analysis: Once you can read blueprints, you will have to analyze the information that is listed so that you can best decide where to go with your ideas. You need the ability to effectively create or remove space in a particular environment so that you can cause little or no disturbance the environment as a whole when making your changes.

Environmental Lighting: Many people forget that lighting is included in any space changing project. You must have knowledge of how lighting works, and have a general idea of what is needed to install light fixtures in areas that do not have them already. Many homes are not equipped with lighting fixtures in some rooms. Of course, if you wish to change the lighting fixtures from general lamps to say, track lighting, you may have a problem if you do not understand how to install it.

Basic Plumbing & pipe structure: If adding or changing spaces in kitchens and bathrooms, plumbing fixtures are often changed or re-organized. You will need to understand their basic functions in order to effectively plan a change that involves them, or is to be done around them.

Before you consider Interior Design as a profession, you should ask yourself these questions.

Am I Creative?

Creativity is a subtle, but important quality to have when considering interior design as a profession. Much of your advancement will depend on your ability to be original in your creative efforts to design any space. Clients will always want to keep a designer that can offer them something that nobody else has.

You will also need to be able to turn whatever items that they already have into works of art. Sometimes clients do not want to change everything, or buy new furnishings and draperies; they simply want to make whatever they do have look and feel different. Creative thinking is the only thing that is going to help here.

- Colors are your friend, and creativity can help you in setting colors against one another. Many designers love to add color to a room and change things just using this method and perhaps adding accents to existing items.
- Accents in a room can vary. You can create a great space by adding throw pillows, valances, and vases. This is the perfect career choice for a person that likes to be creative, but not idle and/or isolated.

Am I Organized?

- Believe it or not, Interior Designers have to be extremely well organized to be able to handle all of the little details that go into doing a good job. You have to be able to keep track of your entire inventory, while keeping on top of other things also like, materials, tracking orders, employees, and making sure that you stay on or below the budget that your client set out for you.
- It is no easy feat to try and keep track of all the things that have to be done; especially when you've got people constantly surrounding you. You must monitor what everyone is doing and still manage to keep up on what you should be doing. Do not forget that you also have to appear calm because your clients will likely be asking you a great deal of questions. If you are scattered and panicked, it will be difficult to answer all the questions and look cool at the same time.
- The ability to know where everything is at, and where every person is at is another aspect of organization. It is very hard to keep jobs if you are constantly wondering where things, and employees are.
- You will need to be very well organized if your design projects lead you to having to add or remove a room and/or

wall. This type of work requires the use of blueprints. You must be able to read them as well as draw them up, you cannot do this without a great sense of organization.

How Good am I at Problem Solving?

The ability to problem solve is a necessity for an Interior Designer. As an Interior Designer, you will encounter glitches, and it is a must that you can deal with them. Many times, these glitches will need to be solved on the spot.

Your organizational skills will come in handy when you need to solve a problem as well. An organized workplace will help you to have an organized mind. Thoughts have a way of being cluttered when your work space is likewise.

Being able think quickly and under pressure is a definite asset to problem solving. Your problem is not going to get easier if it takes you too long to come up with a solution for it. Actually, waiting can just give the universe more time to make the problem get bigger.

Can I Multitask?

Most jobs require a good ability to multitask. None of these jobs requires it as much as Interior Design does. The reason for this is because Interior Designers are often doing

more than one thing at a time. You can be giving instructions to your contractors, working with your assistant on the fabrics, all while explaining it your client. This can cause a little bit of stress, but if you are good at multitasking, it is not so bad.

If you are not particular good at multitasking, you need not worry. Some people have just never been put to the test as far as that's concerned. You may have had a relaxed job setting, or you may have worked on an assembly line for a few years. Many jobs require you to do regular tasks. They can be quite monotonous. If this sounds like you, I will list a few tips on how to help you learn to multitask.

Tips for Multitasking

- 1.** Using computers can be a great way to save time and get many things done at the same time. Windows programs allow you to use more than one program at a time. Get familiar with it.
- 2.** Review the tasks ahead of you before hand, and work on one item at a time. It helps you to prioritize your day.

Focus on the most important tasks first, and the less important later.

3. Use your down time to prepare for the next day. This will help you to be more organized at the start of your day, so that you can keep your tasks at a comfortable level, and minimize stress.
4. Having constant access to your employees and clients is invaluable. Cell phones are a must for the successful multitasker. It keeps you in touch with everyone you need to talk to during the course of your day. (remember to start each day with a fully charged battery)
5. The ability to keep calm is a must. Practice relaxation techniques as often as possible. Some of these include deep breathing, warm soaks in the tub, and reading. If you already have great techniques, use them.

Am I personable?

- The ability to meet and associate yourself with people is a good and necessary skill when seeking to be an interior designer. Much of your job will require you to meet and convince people that you are the best person to design their space. A friendly, outgoing, and professional attitude is the easiest way to accomplish that.

- You must be able to speak to people at their level. Speaking above them is going to confuse your client; while speaking below them is insulting.
- You must be able to read people in order to properly assess how to deal with them. This is a quality that you cannot afford to be without. Much of your job as a designer is negotiation, and knowing how read other people is the key to success in this area.
- People have to feel at ease when they talk to you. You should always try to exude warmth and intelligence when speaking to your clients and possible clients.
- Since you are to be aware of what other people's body language says about them, know that they are looking for the same thing when they are speaking to you. Be aware of all of your facial expressions and hand gestures.

Can I Be Versatile?

The ability to be versatile and change with the times is a definite must. As Interior Designers are expected to be ahead of the pack when it comes to the newest trends and fads, your ability to change your current way of thinking will be critical to your success.

Most people hire Interior Designers so that they can keep up and stay modern. If the designer is only capable of sticking to the basics and originals, it will be a disastrous career as a designer.

Of course, that is not the only reason why versatility is a necessity. Clients sometimes change their minds about what they want. It's annoying, but it happens. You have to be able to change with them. Your ability to give the client what they are looking for can be the difference between your being on top of the field, and your finding yourself unemployed.

How Is My Business Sense?

As an Interior Designer, you will need to have a head for business. You will need to have the ability to estimate and put a value to your work. To do that correctly, you will have to calculate the cost of all materials, extra employee labor, furniture costs, paints etc. The ability to negotiate is going to be a priceless skill that you must have or be willing to learn.

- **Negotiation** is the key to almost all of your dealings as an interior designer. You will be negotiating with your clients, either to get them, or on budget requirements. You

will be negotiating with contractors at times, furniture dealers, and everyone else that can play a role in you getting the job done to your client's specifications.

- **Marketing** is another aspect of business that will be very important for you to be familiar with. Interior Designers spend a great deal of time in marketing their services. The easiest aspect of the marketing that is needed in Interior Design is that the demand will always be there. Buildings, shops, homes etc will always be in the world, as well as the need to design the interiors of them. All you will need is the ability to produce the supply.
- **Advertising** can be the most effective tool in developing your interior design business. It will be difficult to get the public to know that you are there without it. If your budget is small there are many things that you can do for a cheap price or even free. You can pass out flyers, build a internet homepage from a free host supplier (many of these have their own wizards to help guide you if you are not html savvy), pass out business cards or leave them in stores that will allow it. There are many things that you can do, just be creative.
- **Bookkeeping** is a necessity for the self employed. You have to know how to manage your business' financial statements.

You also have to handle payroll, accounts payable (money you owe) and accounts receivable (money people owe/give you)

Different Types of Interior Designers

Interior Designers rarely work in every field. It is common for them to pick areas to specialize in. By choosing a specialty, you can further enhance your skills and abilities in that mode of design. It will certainly make for a better portfolio, and will allow you the time to become an expert designer in that field. Here are some of the specialty fields that you can go into.

Sometimes designers choose to specialize in residential areas, and sometimes they choose to specialize in commercial properties. Some even narrow their field that they specialize in by only doing work for certain types of homes and businesses.

It is also quite common for designers to refuse to specialize at all. Some will work wherever the work is. This leaves the field a little bit wider for them, but specializing is a more professional route to take. It is also better for your portfolio in the long run.

Residential Interior Designer

These designers do most of their work in people's homes. They design various rooms inside and around the home. There is a lot of freedom in this type of field because clients generally let their designers have free reign to let their creativity create a beautiful space for them. You can do inside work, patios, guest houses, and even garages.

Many Interior Designers prefer this type of work because it is less stressful, and the deadlines are usually a little bit more relaxed. Homeowners rarely harass you to keep them posted on every aspect of what you are doing, so it can be a rewarding specialty. When you are allowed to create something that makes both you and the client happy, the feeling is much better.

The money that can be made doing residential design can be a little bit less lucrative at times, but there are always wealthy people that can use a great interior designer as well. Sometimes, the work for residential areas can be quite small also. This type of work is generally for the designer that is in love with the aspect of being creative, rather than the need to be rich. If you are thinking of Interior Design as a means of expressing your creativity, this could be the right place for you.

Commercial Interior Designer

Designers that specialize in commercial property and work do projects for businesses. The type of business varies greatly. You can do work for banks, hotels, restaurants, law firms; you name it. Any business that you can dream of is open to this specialty.

Good people skills and negotiation techniques are a vital aspect of this specialty as well. After all, you are dealing with business people. They respond well to a good business person. You could be required to design an office space, a hallway, lobby, and possibly an entire interior building. The possibilities are endless here.

This is a specialty where your ability to estimate the value of your own work will come in handy because many businesses accept bids from the designers that they are interested in working with. Also, you will often have to work under specific instructions as to what the client is looking for, so listening skills will be important here.

This type of specialty can be very lucrative if you can establish a good rapport with your client. Doing a good job will lead to a steady, return client, and your ability to satisfy this client will often guarantee you more work as the

client's word of mouth can lead to other businesses desiring your services.

You may also have to work a little more closely with your client in this field as well because business people like to be on top of things to ensure that they are done right. It may be a little bit annoying at times, but it is worth it in the end.

These are not the only branches of specialty. Some designers can choose any sub branch to specialize in as well. There are quite a few and all of them are intended for the designer that has a particular forte in the field. They also offer great employment opportunities for the designer that would like to make extra money on the side. They are as listed below.

- **Kitchen and Bath:** This is a branch that you may wish to specialize in if you are quite adept at it, or if you have a general knack for it already. There are a great many possibilities in this branch because these are areas of the house that are often in need of dramatic change, and they are high traffic areas. You should have knowledge in cabinetry and plumbing for this particular branch.

- **Windows and Draperies:** This seems like a small area to specialize in, but the windows of a house or building play a big role in the overall structure. They are a source of energy efficiency in every home, and they are often changed on a yearly basis. Basic heating and cooling knowledge helps, as well as dry walling, and space management.
- **Lighting:** The lighting of any area is often a bit more complicated than plugging a lamp into a socket. Often, it is the addition of special lighting that can completely change a room's environment. Some small additions or subtle lighting can change the way a room feels. Lighting is an often overlooked sub branch of Interior Design.

How do I Choose a Specialty?

Choosing a specialty really depends on you. You really just need to ask yourself a few simple questions to really know which field might give you the most enjoyment.

What is more important to me?

If you are very much inclined toward the creative aspect of interior design, you may prefer to be a residential designer. As stated above, you will likely have more freedom in doing homes than you would in designing professional structure. Many of the sub branches of specialty are better suited, but not restricted to residential designers. Much of your specialty will depend on your better interest.

However, if you are hoping to use your creativity to possibly put you into a better tax bracket, you may prefer to do commercial work. This type of work is generally on a larger scale than in residential jobs. The offered pay per room is usually a bit higher as well. Both fields are great to work in, and both offer many rewards.

Choosing a specialty is often easy, but it can be more rewarding for you to have one. It doesn't really matter which area you choose because they all have their rewards and difficulties. The most advantageous reason to specialize is obviously to set yourself up as an expert in your field. Many people would prefer an expert to a designer that does work in all areas. It adds to your professional status.

What will I have to do to specialize?

Once you have decided on what type of specialty you would prefer, you have to know what it takes to make that happen. Since creativity and interest are not the only requirements you will need to be an Interior Designer, you will also need to know what is needed in order to specialize.

Education is the biggest and most useful tool when you choose to specialize. Being certified in your area of interest is a good place to start. In order to receive your certification, you must learn all of the technical aspects of design as well as the creative. Technical things have a larger range than you might think. Knowledge in any field is a requirement.

What you need to know

- The ability to read and design blue prints
- Knowledge of color coordination and painting
- Difference between furniture brands and styles
- How to coordinate and organize a room to create a comfortable environment.
- How to correctly estimate the length and size of materials needed

- How to correctly estimate the amount of paints or wallpapers needed
- How to maximize interior space to the room's advantage.
- How to communicate your ideas effectively to your client
- Basic marketing skills are needed to further your business
- How to correctly identify different types of furnishings, and to incorporate that knowledge into a legitimate design plan.
- How to create an environmental plan because this is a practical, conducive and esthetic approach to your eventual goal of raising productivity, and selling your merchandise.
- How to explain space planning, lighting, layout and color schemes to your clients. People often like to know why you are doing the things that you are doing.
- How to arrange carpets, accessories, drapes and wall coverings.
- Knowledge of fine arts, sculptures, music etc. These will often be included in your design changes and must incorporate properly into the area. (you would not want to hang a Picasso in a Victorian themed room)

This is just an idea of the things that you will be taught in accordance to your specialty. Interior design for a home is slightly different than commercial design. The needs for a home are quite different. Materials are different as well. When you chose a specialty, you will learn all of the basics in design, but also how to deal with, and get clients effectively. That is where things are quite different. You would not approach a company in the same manner that you might approach a homeowner.

Is Interior Design Right for Me?

There are many pros and cons to being an interior designer. To best understand whether or not you might be interested in being an interior designer you may want to explore these items listed below, and learn all that there is to know.

PROS	CONS
There is a great potential to make a lot of money	This field goes through dry spells. The economy plays a big part in this.
You are uninhibited in your potential to advance	Can be quite stressful at times
You can make your own hours	Deadlines can be hard to meet

	at times
You are your own boss	Client ideas may be unrealistic
There is always a demand for it	You often work under pressure
You are free to be creative and express yourself	You are responsible for your employees actions
You can work as much or as little as you want	You may encounter horrible people
You have the option of turning down projects	You may lose projects to lower bids
You get to set your own work environment.	You are often subjected to one area of expertise.

This should have given you a pretty good idea of what you may generally expect from your career as a designer. You may be wondering how the economy plays a role in this particular career choice. The answer is simple. If the local or national economy is going through a recession, or depression, the potential to encounter any new clients is rather small if at all.

Current clientele cannot afford to hire an interior designer if the economy is suffering, no one can. In times like this, people are a lot more careful about how they spend their money, and hiring an interior designer seems more frivolous than it might seem under normal circumstances. Of course, during most

economic conditions, an interior designer can always locate someone that is willing and eager to hire them.

What Do I Need?

The first thing that you are going to need if you want to be an interior designer is the passion for it. You must ask yourself is whether or not designing homes and/or properties is something that you could feel passionate about. To find out ask, yourself these questions.

- Do you constantly rearrange the furniture in your own home?
- Do you often have ideas about friends and families homes, and what would make them look better?
- Are you finding that people often ask your opinion about their own homes, and what you think may make it look better?
- Do you like planning the rearrangement of your home before you do it?
- When decorating your own home, do you find yourself wondering how best to incorporate colors into your space?

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, than you already have the passion to become an interior designer. These questions merely touched on the very thing that drew you to this book in the first place. It just helped you realize that you were right in doing so.

The second thing that may need to become an interior designer is the interest. This basically explores whether or not your actual interest is genuine. Many people consider a great many careers before they develop a genuine interest in choosing one. We know that you have the passion, but does that passion mean that you have enough interest to follow through? I have some more questions for you to answer if you really want to know if the interest is really there for you.

- Do you feel the need to learn how best to coordinate the colors in your room before you seek to change them?
- Do you seek outside advice from professionals on how best to accent a particular object or color?
- Do you seek to know the history behind a particular style of décor when you notice one?
- Do you find yourself wondering what sort of planning went in to the creation of a glorious room you've been in?

- Would you prefer to read a design magazine above any other? (Modern Living, or Country Style Home)
- Do you think that Martha Stewart is nothing compared to you?

Again, a yes answer to any of these questions means a yes to your interest. But there is another aspect of interior design that must be covered. You may wish to be a certified interior designer. If that is the case, you will need to get a formal education in this field.

College and University

For a formal education in interior design, it is best to go to an accredited College or University. You must ask about this because some schools are not accredited and you will walk away from that school with a piece of paper that says that you took the course, but you will still not have the proper credentials. Therefore, you will not be a licensed designer. Here is a list of some of the courses you can expect to take if you choose to get certified as a designer.

- Drawing

- Building construction
- Drafting
- History of design
- Furniture design
- Architecture
- Auto CAD
- Project management
- Design
- Computer aided Design

Of course there are many more courses that are a part of becoming a certified designer, but this at least gives you an idea of where you might start. You will also have to have certain high school courses to your credit before you should consider going to college or university to study design. These are:

- Mathematics 4 years
- English 4 years
- Physics 1 year
- History/Social studies 1 year
- Computer Science 1 year
- Architectural Drawing 1 year
- Shop class 1 year

Tuition at any one of these schools can be quite expensive. You can expect to spend anywhere between **\$8,000** a year to **\$15,000** a year. A general certification course will run for four years. Getting certified could cost you anywhere from \$32,000 to \$60,000. Of course, financial aid is always available for those that need assistance.

If these numbers and time frames scare you don't worry, there are alternatives to this type of formal schooling. There are also cheaper alternatives to getting certified. You can try any of the following.

Trade Schools

There are many trade schools out there that offer Interior Design as a course. Some of these schools are accredited and can give you the certification that you need. (Know that your credentials will not be as high or recognizable as those from a College or University) These schools do offer many of the same courses but they are condensed, and blended together to suit a shorter course duration.

You can generally expect the entire course to last from one year or two. The tuition is generally half of what you could expect to pay at a College or University. Your tuition could cost as little as \$8,000 for two years or \$4,000 for one. Materials are generally included in the tuition, and financial aid is also available.

Some Trade Schools do not have a set schedule for the finish of a program. Some will let you go at your own pace and finish as quickly or slowly as you need to. If you chose to go this route, be sure to check to see that it is an accredited school, and ask what is included in your tuition. Also ask what type of certification you will receive.

Online Design Programs

Not everyone is comfortable with the idea of going to a school for Interior Design. Some may prefer to learn how to do it from the comfort of their own home. This method is not recommended if you are trying to become certified, but if you just want to get the basic knowledge that you are required to know, this method is fine.

There are literally thousands upon thousands of courses for interior design that are offered online. Finding one that has the right information you will want to learn will require some research on your part, but it's not that difficult. Course prices for internet schools of design can start as low as \$19.00 and go as high as \$500.00.

Some online courses that are offered through legitimate Colleges and Universities are much cheaper than campus courses and offer the correct certification that you will need. Generally, these courses require that you take your exams on campus or in a monitored way of some sort. Again, research is needed to ensure that you are not being scammed.

There are some alternatives to taking any formal courses at all. This called "self teaching". This is where you will study the necessary information that you will need to do Interior Design as a profession, but you will not be certified.

Self Teaching

Teaching yourself to learn any field takes a lot of discipline and a great deal of interest. You have to be a motivated person and have the ability to focus solely on your task, but it can be done. There are many Interior Designers that are working without any formal education. They are simply going

on intuition and talent. It is rare to learn all of the things that you need to know by teaching yourself, but it a possibility. These are some of the things that you will need in order to teach yourself interior design.

- Learn the proper terms from various books on interior design.
- Observe the many techniques and trends from circulating magazines and catalogs.
- Teach yourself to calculate the amounts of paint and wallpaper need to per wall by talking to your local professionals.
- Get as much practice as you can in your own home or at others'
- Use your local library or bookstore to help you brush up on the proper ways of incorporating space and a balance of space.

Pros and Cons of Self Teaching

Pros	Cons
Learn at your own speed	You don't get the benefit of a teacher's guidance and help
You don't get final exams	You don't get certification

Cheaper than paying tuition costs	Tuition is expensive
Learn in the comfort of your own home	Must learn with others watching and judging you
Have online assistance when needed	Have to wait to use computers
Practice projects can be a lot less stressful	Still have to take drafting and other technical classes
Extra classes needed are often free at adult schools	You don't get help finding client prospects
You can earn while you learn	You can earn while you learn (may be overworked)
You can take breaks whenever you want	You can take breaks whenever you want. (may lose incentive)

- Never underestimate the power of Feng Shui. Purchase books on it if you can because it is a great resource for this type of work.
- Get a job at a department or furniture store so that you can get a feel for the job, and the newest and most interesting design techniques. This method lets you earn while you learn.

The best way to teach yourself is to keep up on current trends through magazines and furniture catalogues. It may sound strange, but it is a good start. You will however have no choice but to take a drafting and blueprinting class. You cannot avoid this. Fortunately there are many adult classes available for free.

You will also need to create a portfolio. A portfolio is like a scrapbook that has all of the listings and photographs of your work to date. Do not worry if you do not have a portfolio right away because I will give you some tips on how to build a portfolio, with little or no professional expertise.

Your portfolio will help your future clients see what work you've done, which will give them an idea of what you are capable of doing for them. This is your best marketing tool, so make it look as professional as possible. You will also want to add letters of recommendation to your portfolio when possible, or you can request from clients that they allow you to list them in your portfolio as satisfied customers.

The Designer's Necessity

- Business cards are must haves. You should carry at least 20 of them daily.
- Carry your portfolio with you in your car. It makes for easy references in a pinch. (You never where your next client will turn up)
- Most recent issues of Design Magazines make for quick inspiration. (Not a bad way to pass time either)
- Measuring tape
- Paint and color swatches
- Wallpaper, and carpet sample books. Keep them in your car.
- A copy of your certifiable credentials (if applicable)

What Can I Expect?

There is literally no limit to how much money you can earn as an Interior Designer. Of course a lot of that depends on what type of position you plan to have in the field as well. An assistant interior designer can start at \$20.00 an hour, a certified interior designer can start anywhere from \$50,000-\$60,000 annually, and a partner can make as much as \$200,000 annually.

These are really general estimates, but they are as was listed in 2003 in Decorator's Home Journal. Every person that is interested in Interior Design as a career can expect to make as much or as little as they want. You can virtually decide your financial potential on your own.

Extra Information: Many Interior Designers create their own products and product lines. They design everything from furniture, to furniture accessories. It can be a great way to promote your design services, and make a little bit of extra money. It's relatively common practice among designers, you may want to consider it.

What to expect when Getting Started

When you are just getting started in any business, you can expect to have to do a lot of leg work to get a clientele base. This is not easy, and requires a great deal of people skills from you. You will have to go out there and meet every person that you can think of.

You should expect to encounter a lot of rejection from consumers, as well as competition from other designers. Many times, a potential client will want to place your work and estimates against others. If you can, offer to outbid everyone that you can, but be careful because a client may not tell you

the truth about the bids. It is good to try and check with the designers about their bids. Some will tell you.

As a new Interior Designer, you can expect to get a lot of resistance from potential clients. You can expect to spend a great deal of time and money on building up your name. You may have to lower your estimates at first. You may have to spend some money by advertising your services in your local newspaper or penny saver.

Here are a few good ideas on how you can get some attention for you and your business.

1. Set up a booth at your local mall. Have business cards and your portfolio on hand. Try and set up some of your best work around you and prop them up for all to see. Offer free estimates to any takers.
2. Do the same at any other community gatherings.
3. Offer to do small jobs for free with the addition of a paid space.
4. Insert flyers into you local newspaper.
5. Build your portfolio.

How to Start your Interior Design Business

Starting any business is never simple, but it doesn't have to be as complicated as many people think. A lot of what is needed is actually fun. You have to understand that much of starting any business requires you to be a salesman. You have to build yourself and your company up.

You must get a business number and registration. You can check your government listings for the correct number. You must also check with your local accountant to see what needs to be done about taxes etc.

You must also decide if you are going to be a home business or if you are planning to run a studio for a lease. Make sure to purchase all of the necessary materials. Some items you can get for free if you know where to look. Here is a list of some of those materials.

What you will need

- Color swatches for paints and fabrics (you can get many of them for free from local paint stores if you ask)
- Fabric samples are a necessity (you can get them for free from your local furniture store)
- Interior design magazines for client perusal (it helps them get an idea of what they like)

- Furniture catalogues (free from furniture dealers and retailers)
- Fine arts catalogue, get them from art galleries
- Kitchen and bathroom catalogues. Basically get catalogues from everybody that deals with furniture, art, and lighting stores
- Photos of your work, and signed recommendations (remember you get them from family and friends when you are just starting out)
- Your portfolio (always have a copy of your portfolio)

Tips for Building a Portfolio with Little or no Professional Experience

1. Ask Friend or family to let you design a room in their house, and take pictures of your work for the portfolio.
2. Get your friends and family to write letters of recommendation for you or list themselves as references.
3. A leather binder, or photo album can be used to hold all of this information until you have better resources.
4. If you have them, copies of your credentials should be placed at the front of your portfolio to assure your future clients that you are qualified.

5. Put your best work forward. Do not show any work that you are not proud to have done.

There are of course a couple of items that Interior designers always have on hand at all times. These are rather necessary, even if you are just starting out or want to get started.

Here is a list of some of the things that will be invaluable to you as you start your own Interior Design business. They are simply ways of helping you know what to do to get a possible client base.

1. **Sell yourself:** You will want to sell the public on your services and abilities. Do as much promotion as you can. Go everywhere that you can think of that hosts design events, and set yourself up as a contender.
2. **Mingle:** Try to meet as many different types of people as possible. Go to golf and country clubs with a load of business cards on hand. Be sure to have your portfolio on hand in case you get any bites. Go to all of the popular events in your area and start talking to people.
3. **Start-Up Help:** There are many places that you can go to get help with start up money. This only applies to people who are seeking to lease a studio outside of the home.

Check your local government or business assistance programs.

4. Establish your Position: You want to ensure that you can let your community know that you are out there. Handing out flyers, offering special discounts or free services to your neighbors can let the people get a sample of your work. It is a good way to get your neighbors to spread the word.

5. Build your Clientele: I cannot express too much, the importance of approaching homeowners and businessmen with your ideas for refurbishing their spaces.

Quick Tips on Pricing your Services

Every Interior Designer has to learn how to price their services. You have to do this so that you can give proper estimates to your clients. This will be invaluable to you as a service provider.

Many people find this to be a very difficult process because they don't want to over price their clients, nor do they want to lose money on the deal. This can be very frustrating and stressful. However, if you know how to break down the costs it

gets a lot easier, and helps you break it down to the client so that they are comfortable.

Since every job is different, every invoice will be different as well. There are different types of invoices that you should have. They each require a different layout and outline. This makes it easier to break down later for calculating the costs.

1. **Costs and Labor:** This type of invoice is for designers that have to hire outside contractors to help with the work. (usually when you need to hire people to do drywall for construction work etc)
2. **Costs:** This type of invoice is generally just for the costs of the extra furniture and accessories or lighting fixtures that are needed. It also covers the agreed upon extras like paint and wallpaper.
3. **General:** This is the type of invoice that only covers your prices as the designer. It deals with the work that you do alone. This invoice is always included with one of the others.

When trying to decide how to put a value to your services alone, that is pretty much up to you. It is best not to price yourself too high in the beginning because you are not a bankable name yet. There are two ways to charge your clients.

- 1. Hourly:** This method is best for small or simple projects because they are more difficult to price on a per project basis. If you are a starter, you should start yourself at around \$15-\$20 an hour. At least until you establish yourself in the field. Once you are established you may charge as much as you'd like.
- 2. Per Project:** This is generally reserved for projects of a larger scale. These are the projects that require the hiring of contractors and various others to help you. Since there is so much work involved, you cannot expect to charge by the hour.

Places where you can find Work

Not everyone that is interested in interior design will want to run their own business. Some would prefer to express their creativity while working for someone else. There are many places that you could work and still be an interior designer. I've made a list of places and jobs that you could do if starting your own business is just not right for you right now.

- Architectural Firm, you can read and create blueprints, draw up sample pieces, and create models.

- Design center Showroom: In this job, you get to design and arrange the items on the showroom floor. This is often in furniture stores, department store windows etc. it can be a lot of fun.
- Retail Furniture Store: You can set up the floor area, mark up the material, and learn the basics of mix and match furniture. (also called eclectic)

Many of these jobs are great if you are a self learner. They will give you a great deal of experience in sales, design, and coordinating fabrics and colors. It is a great way to get the basics before starting your own business.

By now you will know if a career in Interior Design is right for you. I hope that you will enjoy your new career, and that you got all of the tips that you need to make the right choice for you.