

Design Session Tools

Below are all of the tools that we have gone through so far in the Design Sessions. As we move through the Beach House room by room I am going to highlight every tool I needed in the process of designing that specific room. Below are all of the Design Session tools (excluding Christmas) with the tools I used to design the Beach House's kitchen in bold.

Tool 1	The Key Principles of Accessorizing	Tool 17	Moulding and Wall Treatments
Tool 2	Budget Friendly Ways to Buy Accessories	Tool 18	How to Use Fabrics to Pull Things Together
Tool 3	How to Lay Out Your Furniture	Tool 19	Tile for Your Home
Tool 4	Tablescapes and Entertaining for the Fall Season	Tool 20	The Business of Built-Ins
Tool 5	Lighting a Home Perfectly	Tool 21	How to Refresh Your Home
Tool 6	Beautiful Window Treatments	Tool 22	All About the Flooring
Tool 7	Bedroom and Closet Decluttering	Tool 23	The Art of Stone Countertops
Tool 8	Accessorizing for the Spring Season	Tool 24	BONUS: Lighting Trick
Tool 9	Selecting Paint Colors for Your Home	Tool 25	Project Management
Tool 10	Selecting, Placing and Arranging Art	Tool 26	Discovering Your Design Style
Tool 11	Hanging and Placing Wall Decor (3D)	Tool 27	The Transitional Design Style
Tool 12	Furniture Arranging - How to Get it Right	Tool 28	Small Space Design
Tool 13	Tips for Area Rugs	Outdoor 1	How to Boost Your Curb Appeal
Tool 14	Tips for Beautiful Bedding	Outdoor 2	Outdoor Planting with a Pro
Tool 15	Accessorizing to Personalize Your Home	Outdoor 3	Outdoor Decorating Tips
Tool 16	How to Decorate with Throw Pillows		

The Design Process

This part of the process is strictly about planning and placement. The only shopping you will be doing for these eight steps is window shopping! All of these steps I highly recommend going through BEFORE you even consider calling a contractor. The more questions you have answered before calling a general contractor if you will be using one, the better!

Let's Get to Designing!

1. Assess the Situation (Tool 25)

Take a hard look at your room and try to answer the following questions:

- What are the issues?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the things you love about the room?
- What are the things you can't stand?

Using the Beach House as an example, the main issue was that there was very little storage space. This was going to present a challenge for me as it was a pretty small kitchen. It is a galley kitchen which means there is a narrow passage way through the middle with cabinets and countertops lining either side. What I didn't like about the kitchen was that it was dark, out of date and like I said had minimal storage space. What I loved was the ocean view you had from certain areas, but the arched opening was pinched and distracted from the million dollar view! I also loved the idea of vintage appliances, but the existing appliances were deteriorating with rust and needed to be updated.

2. Identify the Style You Want to Implement (Tool 26)

After you assess your kitchen's current state, you want to decide on the style you will be going for. This will help guide all of your decisions to follow. You'll be selecting hardscape materials like flooring (**Tool 22**), stone (**Tool 23**), tile (**Tool 19**), etc. after this and they all depend on the style you are going for. This is a great time to go shopping, and by shopping I mean window shopping! See what's out there and what you gravitate towards. Get an idea of what's new, what's in your budget and what styles of kitchens you like. Really get those creative juices flowing! Don't forget to take photos, gather brochures and ask for measurements and finish samples. Trust me, you'll need these! This is the fun part. Don't let it overwhelm you because I am going to walk you through the entire process!

The Beach House was a combination of styles, but mainly the coastal and Scandinavian styles. I carried this theme into the Beach House's kitchen. I wanted to create a seamless look that was modern yet earthy and high-end yet down to earth. I also wanted to incorporate state of the art appliances that would function with the smart home technology I had installed throughout the entire Beach House.

3. Make a Floor Plan

My M.O. is the use the 3D modeling program Sketch Up Pro. If you are interested in learning this program you can download a free version of it, and also take an easy beginners class I teach on UDEMY. [Click here to check out that course.](#) If you don't want to deal with Sketch Up, no problem! Grab some graph paper and start measuring! For a kitchen here are a few very important things to think about when making your layout:

A. Where is your triangle?

Your triangle is key to creating a functional kitchen layout. The triangle includes your sink, cooktop and refrigerator. These three pieces of your kitchen should lay out in a triangle shape. To get a bit technical for a second, no leg of the triangle should be less than 4 ft (1.2 m) or more than 9 ft (2.7 m). The sum of all three sides of the triangle should be between 13 ft (4.0 m) and 26 ft (7.9 m). Follow these simple rules to ensure proper function in your kitchen.

In the Beach House I kept the sink in its current location because it's in front of the only window in the kitchen and its plumbing was already in place. On the opposite wall (7 ft away to be exact) I placed the refrigerator. Finally, 5.5 ft to the left of the refrigerator I placed the cooktop which happened to be 8.5 ft away from the sink. I have achieved the perfect work triangle!

B. Where will everything in your kitchen be stored?

This step you are thinking only about the the placement of your cabinets and drawers, not the style of your cabinets and drawers. Here are the questions I ask myself when tackling storage in a kitchen:

- Can you relocate some items currently being stored in the kitchen?
- Can you maximize your storage space by building up your wall height versus your floor space?
- Which items do you need easy access to and which items can be in harder to reach places because they get used less often?
- Do you want your knives in drawers or in a block on the countertop?
- Did you make space for your spices near the stove?
- Do you need a wall oven (or two)?
- Are your dishes stored near the dishwasher and towels near the sink?
- Do you want a trash compactor and/or recycle bin?
- How much countertop space do you need?
- Are you right or left handed? This is important because the plumber will ask you which side of the sink you want your faucet handle to be on.
- Will your small appliances be on the counter or stored away?
- Do you prefer drawers or cabinets?

In the Beach House I wanted to open up the space, but I knew that fewer wall space meant fewer cabinet space. By rethinking what was currently being stored in the kitchen I was able to relocate some things and regain some space. This allowed me to open the wall to the great room and add a new functional bar for casual eating. It also allowed me to widen the entry to the kitchen from the hallway and create a wow first impression of the range! Since I eliminated some of the upper cabinets to achieve my goals, I had to get super creative in my cabinet design to maximize storage everywhere possible!

C. Where will you need plumbing?

In a kitchen you need plumbing for faucets, sinks, garbage disposals, water filtration in your refrigerator and the pot filler above your cooktop.

During my inspiration shopping trip I fell in love with this 48" galley sink. It provided the best of both worlds - a huge sink and extra counter space! Who knew such a thing was even possible? I selected an industrial style faucet in polished chrome with an extra long neck since it was a super wide sink. All of the additional pieces were added in the same polished finish. To the right of the sink I made room for a trash pullout with space for a trash and recycling bin.

D. Where will your appliances be placed?

I love to design kitchens that have a fantastic focal point. Personally, I like having the cooktop or range be that fantastic focal point. If you choose to have only a cooktop, you'll need to save some wall space for one or two ovens. The advantage of a cooktop is the ability to have drawers below it for your pots and pans. In smaller kitchens, I often choose to do a range with the oven below the burners. You will also need to decide if you would prefer a gas, electric or dual fuel range. My new favorite is the LG 48" dual fuel range that offers Sous Vide technology (from the Signature Kitchen series)! Once I select my range or cooktop, the other appliances you need to think about here are your refrigerator, freezer, wine fridge, dishwasher, trash compactor and in-wall coffee maker. Then, you can consider other luxury cooking aides like a steam oven, convection oven, microwave or even a built-in pizza oven. There are so many amazing appliances available today at a vast array of price points. I suggest looking for a reputable appliance store with outstanding service and let them educate you on your options!

Throughout the Beach House project I was keenly aware of my clients love for their old beach house. To keep some charm, I found a vintage La Cournue range. I created a dramatic first impression of the kitchen from the great room by specifying a 55" matching hood that was wider than the 36" range. For my refrigerator, freezer and dishwasher I integrated them into the cabinets by placing the same wood paneling as the cabinets over them. Finally, I placed a microwave drawer in the under counter cabinets.

HERE IS SOME KITCHEN DESIGN GOLD FOR YOU:

1. Your sink faucet handle should be on the side opposite of your strong hand. For example, I am right handed so my faucet is on the left. Trust me, it works!
2. The standard countertop height is 36"
3. If you have a bar, it should be 42" high
4. Your lower cabinet depth should be 24"
5. For your upper cabinet depth, the standard is 12" but I prefer 14" for larger plates
6. Your upper cabinets should be 18" above your countertops
7. If you have your microwave with the upper cabinets it should have a swing door or dropdown drawer. If you have your microwave with the lower cabinets it should be a microwave drawer.

4. Find the Flooring You Like (Tool 22)

The type and texture of your floors is a very important step in the design process. The flooring covers a large percentage of your room so setting the right foundation is crucial. You will have to decide if you would like your flooring in your kitchen to be cohesive with the flooring in the adjacent rooms or different. There are several types of flooring options you could go with in a kitchen - hardwood, tile, stone. Just a quick tip if you care about having flooring that is easier on your feet, hardwood tends to be more forgiving than tile or stone! Over the years I have designed many kitchens. I have used every type of flooring imaginable - tile, stone, hardwood, luxury linoleum, concrete, you name it! It is all a matter of preference! My word of advice would be to select something that best matches the flooring from adjacent rooms to minimize the abrupt change from room to room.

In the Beach House I chose to bring the rustic 8" hardwood I ran throughout the house into the kitchen. This creates a sense of spaciousness and a seamless flow from room to room.

5. Find the Stone You Like (Tool 23)

Countertops are typically solid slabs of stone these days. I personally prefer quartzite over granite. Another option is quartz which has a very clean and contemporary look. It is a manmade composite material that comes in many different finishes. If you prefer marble, Azerocare technology applied to marble is a great choice! If you choose untreated marble, be prepared for stains. However, if you are looking to create a French or Italian chefs' kitchen stains are often desirable! Once you decide on the type of stone you want, you need to select an edge detail for your countertops. You can work with the stone fabricator to decide on seam placement. If you have a strong opinion on where the veining of the stone should be placed, work with the stone fabricator on the templating of the stone to get it just right!

I chose a beautiful white marble with taupe and gray veining for the Beach House kitchen. The color was perfect for the look of this kitchen. Knowing the staining issues with marble, I specifically chose a stone that had been treated with Azerocare technology, making it virtually bullet proof. I worked directly with the stone fabricator to lay out the template to get the veining exactly where I wanted it to be. Staying with the modern and clean theme, I chose a pencil edge detail and flush mount installation (meaning the countertop is flush with the face of the cabinets).

6. Find the Tile You Like (Tool 19)

Tile is really where you can add some style and make your kitchen uniquely you! If you watch the Design Session specifically on tile and stone, it will help you immensely in this step to ensure your kitchen has flow. I always prefer going all the way to the ceiling with my tile, as opposed to the standard 4-6" backsplash above the countertop. This creates a larger, more impressive look and feel. I often use different tile on the focal wall behind the cooktop, but am very cautious about choosing a tile my clients won't get sick of. Ask yourself when looking at that tile with grapes on it if you really think you'll love those grapes forever? You will also need to select grout colors for your contractor. DON'T let the contractor decide this for you, this is your kitchen! You may also want to direct your tile installer on how exactly you want the tile to be installed.

With limited wall space available in the Beach House, I was careful to chose a backsplash that was simple, serene and timeless (if there is such a thing) - white subway tile! However, I didn't choose just any old subway tile. I chose a white mat finish that was super clean and slightly organic. I surrounded the entire kitchen with this tile with two exceptions - the focal wall behind the cooktop and the recessed niche to the left of the range. In these two areas I added a splash of style! Behind the cooktop I chose the same subway tile but with pointed ends. There is a slight undulation in the tile which means it isn't completely smooth. This subtle change above the cooktop is fabulous! In the recessed niche I broke away from the surrounding tile and chose a patterned tile with my color scheme in mind. The colors of this tile brought in the white of the surrounding tile, the taupe of the range and hood and the grey of the trim and the doors in the house. Its a splash, not a full orchestra! With all of these selections I brought in just enough interest, but not enough that my clients would get sick of these tiles in 8 years. Finally, I matched the grout color to the tile color because in a small kitchen less lines are favorable!

7. Decide on the Lighting Locations (Tool 5)

With a solid cabinet, appliance and plumbing layout, you can now identify where your lighting should go. In addition to functional lighting in a kitchen, you might want to considering speciality lighting over an island or kitchen table. You can also add lighting to your open shelving, cooktop and hood and underneath the cabinets. If you want to add even more luxury to your kitchen, consider adding lighting inside your drawers and cabinets. Make sure to request dimmers on your light switches and art locations! It is also within this step that you need to decide on the color switch plates and outlet plates that will blend best with your backsplash. Your contractor should be ahead of the game on this, but remember that you'll need outlets for your garbage disposal, trash compactor, refrigerator, wine fridge, in-wall coffee maker, microwave, wall oven and dishwasher.

In a galley kitchen the lighting is pretty straight forward. I added task lighting over the countertops, canned lights to illuminate the cooktop and refrigerator areas and directional lights for the decorative wood wall. Note: a single row of canned lights down the center of the kitchen would have created shadows on both sides of the workstations. I added my signature touch by adding lighting that automatically turned on when you opened all of the drawers, cabinets, pullouts and even the dishwasher! The floating shelves hid rows of LED strip lighting that were hooked up the the smart home system and were fully dimmable.

8. Determine Where You Will Have Window Treatments (Tool 6)

When it comes to window treatments in a kitchen there are a few questions you should ask yourself: Do you even need window treatments? Is there an alternative to fabric window treatments that you can embrace? How will these window treatments coordinate with the other rooms in your home?

I addressed the window above the sink in a rather unusual way in the Beach House. Because the window in the kitchen faced west, I didn't want to compete with the ocean view. I created both easy-access storage and stylish interest around the window by adding open shelves framing the window. I also tucked a motorized roller shade into a soffit for privacy.

The Shopping Process

At this point you've settled on the overall style, finishes and materials you like, the lighting layout and the sizes of everything you need in your kitchen. I hope that by going through the design process you are able to see that there's a lot of planning and problem solving that takes place before you even buy a thing! Now you can officially move on to the fun stuff...

Time To Do Some Shopping!

Here are some tips to help you finalize and purchase all of the things that we planned for in the design process:

1. Cabinets

Finding a good cabinet builder or a store whose cabinets fit your style and budget is a must! Take your drawings and measurements with you, plus any samples of anything you've selected (tile, stone, flooring, etc.). You will need to select your door style, stain, paint and finish color, and discuss any specifics that you want such as pullouts or drawer organization. If for example you have an island and want to change the finish style or color on it, now is the time to include all that information! You will also need to identify any integrated appliances that the cabinet builder will need to build paneled faces for. Make sure to ask for samples as you will need to reference them throughout the rest of the remodel. A reputable cabinet company will likely provide you with shop drawings of your design for approval before they start building your cabinets. This is important and worth paying an extra fee for if requested!

2. Appliances

Take your drawings, measurements and any samples that you have with you when going to make a final decision on the appliances that you want. Be sure to ask about warranties and repair options. Pay attention to the detailed selections (dual fuel, electric, gas, etc.) because this is all important to the successful installation of your dream kitchen. Your well thought out plans should make this process much easier as you know what sizes you need and what you have room for!

3. Flooring (Tool 25)

If your remodel includes replacing your flooring, look for something that fits your lifestyle and blends with the flooring in the adjacent rooms. One piece of advice, do NOT create a border around your kitchen with contrasting material as I explained in this Session. This will make your kitchen look smaller and distract from all of the beautiful things you've designed and selected for your space.

4. **Stone (Tool 23)**

You should know by now to take your drawings, measurements and any samples that you have with you when making any of these final selections. Everything at this point starts pulling together like a puzzle, so be armed with all of your pieces!

Always start with your countertop material. One of the first questions you'll be asked is how many slabs you will need for your project. Your drawings and measurements will make this easy for them to guide you.

5. **Tile (Tool 19)**

Remember to choose tile that you won't get sick of in the years to come. Make sure you place an order for enough tile to create that flow I was talking about! If you want to create any focal points using tile, now is the time to select your specialty tile. Note: 30% overage on tile is recommended as tile can be broken during installation. It is better to be prepared!

6. **Lighting (Tool 5)**

If you have actual light fixtures in your design, now is the time to select them! Keep in mind the metal finish of your plumbing and appliances when selecting your light fixture(s). You don't need to match everything, but just keep it in mind.

7. **Window Treatments (Tool 6)**

Now you can shop for the actual material you want to use on your window treatments. Perhaps you can find ready made treatments you like if you're lucky! If not, Google drapery workrooms in your area if you want a custom treatment.

8. **Paint Color (Tool 9)**

Most people choose their paint color first. BIG MISTAKE! You should go through the entire process above and then choose your paint color. Why? Well, at this point you'll have selected nearly every important item in your kitchen. Now it is easy to lay out all of your selections and choose a color that blends beautifully!

Time to Bring in the Contractor!

With a complete design and all of your selections finalized, you are now well equipped to pull off building your dream kitchen! Your contractor will be impressed with what you've done so far, and his job will be so much easier. Note: your contractor might want to purchase the appliances, plumbing, cabinets, stone, etc. as he or she will be managing the project and will know when each of these items are needed. In that case do the above steps with your contractor. Pass on to your contractor the names and locations of where you made your selections!

The Final Touches

You aren't quite off the hook yet though! You have a few final touches to add to ensure your kitchen has charm, personality and warmth!

1. Pick the Hardware

Your knobs and pulls could very well be considered accessories except for their functional nature. I like to think of them as jewelry in a kitchen! I often mix and match styles and/or finishes according to their function and drawer or cabinet size. Try to repeat some finishes of items you've already selected to create a cohesive look in your kitchen. Personally, I like to stick with knobs on small drawers, cup pulls on larger drawers and longer bar pulls on cabinets. Remember to consider the pulls on your refrigerator and dishwasher if they are paneled to look like your cabinets.

I wanted a sleek and modern look in the Beach House kitchen. I chose a pull style that was mat on the majority of the pull but polished on the corners. The mat finish tied in with the decorative trim on the La Cornue range, the display shelf pipes and the stainless galley sink. The corners of the pulls tied in the sink faucet beautifully! With the exception of the refrigerator and pantry pullouts, all of the handles were installed horizontally. Note: in order to get the look I wanted, I ordered custom sizes (larger than what's offered)

2. Accessorize (Tool 1 & Tool 15)

As you might know, this is my absolute favorite step of the entire design process. This is really where you have the chance to pull everything together. Remember to repeat colors and finishes throughout. In a kitchen specifically, you can add accessories like cookbooks, candles or kitchen appropriate collectables like teacups or spoons!

The open shelving in the Beach House provided a great place to store everyday dishes, drinking glasses and coffee mugs. Since they were on open display I of course kept with my white, gray and clear glass theme! I also included cookbooks on the open shelves and small vases with artificial air plants on the hard to reach shelves. I also created a beautiful vignette next to the range using essential kitchen items (wood cutting boards, olive oil bottles, a honey jar and a cookbook) that were too beautiful to hide away in a cabinet.

3. Hang Art and/or Wall Decor (Tool 10 & Tool 11)

If you have the space for art or wall decor in your kitchen, I say go for it! Keep in mind when it comes to wall decor to make sure it doesn't impede on the kitchen's ease of use and functionality!

On the North wall of the Beach House I added a personal touch for the client by framing an art print of the 100 books her book club has read. On the wood display wall next to the exterior door I added wall decor in the form of a floating mail dispenser and key holder, a modern clock and a floating botanical receptacle. I made sure these pieces didn't stick out too far from the wall that they got in the way. These personal touches added style, function and a touch of nature to this galley kitchen!

4. **Organize**

While cabinet layout is essential to your kitchen remodel, what's inside of your drawers and cabinets is a game changer. If you did your homework in the early stages you'll be ready to move all of your things back into your kitchen with room for everything!

For this step of the design process I brought in my favorite organizer, my daughter, Sharrah. Sharrah made sure to place everything back into the kitchen where it made functional sense - the spices and cookware next to the range, the plates and bowls near the sink and dishwasher and the serving platters near the bar. For the pantry and refrigerator, Sharrah bought matching clear containers and labeled them to make our clients have the ultimate pantry goals!

5. **Make Your Home a Smart Home**

Of course if you want to get fancy make your home a smart home! This step adds to the ease of use, and you can control most everything in your home all in one place!

In the Beach House we had all of the lights and electronics hooked up to one system so our clients could easily turn everything on or off right from their iPad!

You've made it to the end of the design process for a kitchen. I hope that this Design Session and PDF are able to give you a clear guide for how to go about creating a beautiful and functional kitchen! Now there is only one thing left to do...

FILL YOUR PANTRY WITH YOUR FAVORITE FOOD, COOK A DELICIOUS MEAL AND ENJOY YOUR KITCHEN!

