

Where do I even start?

A designer's guide to beginning your interior journey

By Michael Novak-Young

So you've finally decided it's time to tackle your home's interiors. Maybe it's the tired kitchen tiles that are bothering you, or the living room that never quite feels right. You open Pinterest, fall into a rabbit hole of beautiful spaces, and then close your laptop feeling more overwhelmed than inspired. Sound familiar?

As an interior designer, one of the most common things I hear is: "I don't even know where to start." And it's a completely valid point. Whether you're redesigning a single room or planning a full home refresh, the beginning can feel like standing at the foot of a mountain with no clear path to the top.

But here's the good news. You don't need to have it all figured out before you begin. In fact, the best designs often come from asking the right questions at the start, not from having all the answers. So, here's a designer's guide to taking those first few confident steps.

1 Start with how you want to live

Before you start choosing paint colours or sofas, pause and consider how you want to feel in the space. Calm? Energised? Social? Private? Design isn't just about how things look. It's about how your space supports your everyday life.

Ask yourself: What's working, and what's not? These answers become your brief.

2 Make a mood board, but keep it real

Visual references are powerful tools. Gather images of spaces you love. Don't limit yourself to interiors alone, include materials, places, fashion, or artwork that genuinely moves you.

Now look for patterns. Are you drawn to a minimalist white kitchen because it suits your lifestyle, or just because it's trending? The aim is to uncover what consistently resonates with you.

3 Set your priorities and your budget

Trying to do everything at once leads to decision fatigue and overspend.

Choose your priorities. Are you updating a specific room? Making your home more family-friendly? Creating a quiet retreat? Define what matters most and set a realistic budget. From there, you can decide whether to take things step by step or complete the work in one go.

4 Think in layers instead of just layouts

One common misstep is rushing into big purchases like sofas or dining tables without considering the bigger picture.

Instead, approach your space in layers:

- Foundation: flooring, wall finishes, and lighting
- Function: layout, storage, and how the room is used
- Feeling: textures, colours, mood, and personal touches

This layered approach helps create a more thoughtful and cohesive design.

5 Don't be afraid to ask for help

Interior design doesn't have to feel overwhelming, and you don't need a huge budget to bring in a professional. Many designers offer consultations, room-by-room plans, or even virtual services.

A good designer won't impose a signature style. They'll help you uncover yours and give you the tools to bring it to life.

Final Thought

The perfect place to start is rarely the perfect-looking place. It's simply the moment you decide to begin. Be curious, stay open, and give yourself the freedom to evolve your ideas as you go. Great design doesn't start with a shopping list. It starts with you.

