

# **The Big 10 Kitchen Design Mistakes**

**(and how to avoid  
them in your home)**

**by Peter Cross**



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## INTRODUCTION

# Hi. I'm Peter Cross.

**My name is Peter Cross from Rochester, Kent. You're probably wondering what gives me the right to write a guide on kitchen design, so let me explain...**

I am the owner and operator of Ream Interiors, one of the South East's largest kitchen showrooms. I have worked in the construction industry since 1972 and the kitchen industry since 1981. I first started working with Ream Interiors in 1993 before I bought it outright from its then-owners in 2004.

In that time, I designed and sold many thousands of kitchens and helped many people in Kent and South

London achieve their kitchen dreams. I've seen some great successes and real nightmares, which was the ultimate reason for writing this.

In this guide, I wanted to dive into the 10 big mistakes people make when designing and purchasing their kitchen, whilst providing tangible advice that will help you avoid any design and installation potholes, helping you to achieve the kitchen you deserve in the smoothest way possible.





A modern kitchen with white cabinets, a wooden island, and a vase of white flowers. The text is overlaid on the image.

## MISTAKE #1

Your Budget:  
Why It Matters More  
Than You Think (And  
How To Get It Right)

## MISTAKE #1

# How To Get Your Budget Just Right...

When it comes to buying a new kitchen, your budget is perhaps the biggest talking point. If it's not, then I'm here to tell you that it should be.

I've talked to many customers about their projects and budgets over the years, and they usually fall into one of three categories:

**Category 1:** Those who are undertaking a substantial home extension

**Category 2:** Those ripping out their existing kitchen and replacing it with a new one

**Category 3:** Those who want to tackle the design, ordering and installation of their kitchen themselves, with minimal help from others

## **Category 1: Extension Projects**

Whilst some are money-savvy planners, so meticulous that they set aside a specific amount for their kitchen at the end of the project, most people's budget for their kitchen is simply whatever they have left after completing the extension work that comes before it. You know, the hundreds spent on the materials and labour you

need in such a project.

You see, the kitchen is always the last thing to be built in any extension project, and this can cause problems when it comes to budget because, more often than not, the pot of money for your dream kitchen has severely dwindled by this stage due to the rest of the extension being more expensive than you first realised.

### **Category 2: Replacement Kitchens**

If you're having a 'rip out and replacement' (that's what we call it in the trade – essentially you are replacing your current kitchen with the possible addition of taking a wall out to increase the space), then your budget may be more rigid as you haven't got lots of simultaneous work going on. This gives you a little more time to focus on planning the kitchen.

### **Category 3: Doing It All Yourself**

If you want the best kitchen possible and you're thinking about doing everything yourself to save some money, my honest advice is to stop and rethink.

Sure, you can save a portion of money doing it this way, but this often comes at the cost of time, stress, mistakes, project 'creep' (when your project takes 5 times longer than you expected), and a mediocre result.



# “Pete, you’re a kitchen designer so you would say that!”

You may be thinking, “Well, you would say that, Pete. You own a kitchen company!” And you’d be right – fewer people renovating their kitchens and more people paying a company like us to do it is certainly better for me, but I can promise that this advice comes from the best place – I truly want for you to get the best kitchen possible with the resources you have available.

**My real aim is to give you the best advice so that you can avoid making mistakes (the very title of this guide!).** I’ve seen firsthand the number of people coming to my showroom who have made mistakes and wished they had just chosen a trusted provider and a fully project-managed solution in the first place!



**Whichever situation you're in at the moment, I will tell you this:**

***Whatever your budget is, expect to spend a bit more to get what you want.***

What do I mean by that? Well, it's simple. The reason budgeting is at the top of the list of mistakes for most people is that you are making decisions now that you're going to have to live with for the next 15-20 years. You want a space that is going to serve you for, in some instances, a quarter of your entire life.

**Yes, you can spend money over the years on small upgrades to your kitchen and make it better over time, but in my experience, these**

**improvements rarely materialise, and the occupants eventually compromise and make peace with a kitchen that isn't quite right.**

I've seen too many people become unhappy with their kitchen just 6 months after living with it, which leaves a sour taste in their mouths. They wished they had just stretched their budget to get the extra appliance in, or created the utility room they wanted, or designed more usable storage solutions etc, when they had the opportunity. Don't be that person! Find the extra money to get the kitchen you want today, as you will be so glad you did in 5 years when you have the perfect place to host, enjoy family time and create delicious meals!

# Il Ragù Non Ha Fretta.

In Italy, they have a saying about ragu (the beef and tomato sauce served with pasta). "Il ragù non ha fretta." The phrase translates to "Ragu is in no hurry." It essentially means that making a good ragu with rich, deep flavours, takes time. There is simply no substitute for time, and no way to rush it without significantly degrading the result.

Just like a good ragu, your kitchen design needs time to mature. Your thoughts need time to develop to help your kitchen designer finalise your best design. Spending time with pen and paper and formulating your thoughts helps to get a better all-around result.

So, to avoid mistake number one, reassess your budget and give yourself time to properly think about what you want.



## MISTAKE #2

Being Late is Costly:  
Get Your Timing  
Right



## MISTAKE #2

## Time Is Of The Essence

One of the most underestimated parts of a successful kitchen project is timing. If you're planning an extension, the ideal moment to begin your kitchen design journey is once you've received planning approval. Building regulations usually follow as a formality, so don't wait for them to get started.

Some clients get ahead of themselves and begin designing before planning is granted, only to have their ideal kitchen layout ruined when the planners request structural changes. It's incredibly frustrating to fall in love with a design, only to lose it due to circumstances outside your control.

Designing a kitchen takes time. From the initial consultation to the design presentation and the inevitable rounds of tweaks, it's a creative process that shouldn't be rushed. The good news is, your kitchen designer can begin work using your architect's plans long before the build starts, so use that time wisely.

Delays often happen when builders begin pressing for decisions on layouts and services before you've finalised your design. That kind of pressure can lead to poor decisions or compromises that could have been avoided with better foresight.

Ordering your kitchen also

takes time. Even off-the-shelf ranges can have lead times, and if you choose something bespoke such as painted-to-order cabinetry or custom doors, the wait can stretch to many months.

Giving yourself enough breathing room to complete the design process early means everything can be properly planned. Services can be installed in the right places, your builder has clear instructions, and you avoid the stress and cost of last-minute changes. Locking in services too soon can be one of the costliest errors, and it's often driven by poor timing. **More on that in *Big Mistake #5!***



**MISTAKE #3**

**Continuing Your  
Project Without  
Asking a  
Professional**

In most walks of life, making key decisions without consulting a professional can be costly, unwise and sometimes dangerous.

If you wanted to learn to play piano, you'd enlist the services of a piano teacher. If you wanted to become an actor, you'd go to drama school. Chef? College. It often amazes me that when looking for the perfect kitchen, the majority of people would not talk to a true kitchen designer (I'm not including some of the salespeople disguised as designers who work at Wren, Howdens, Magnet and the like - many people talk with them but can often receive substandard advice).

Every kitchen space is unique, every home has different constraints, and every homeowner has different needs. While this guide gives a solid foundation, there are

questions only relevant to your kitchen and your situation that no written guide can answer. Getting professional advice at the right stage can save you from costly errors, wasted space, and future frustrations—and the best part? You don't have to figure it out alone.

For all readers of this guide, I'm offering a free 30-minute design consultation with a member of my talented and experienced design team to help you get clear on your kitchen project. If you would like to find out more about this, please head to the end of this guide for more information.

**FREE 30 MINUTE**  
**DESIGN CONSULTATION**



**CLICK HERE**

A grayscale floor plan of a house is visible in the background. It shows various rooms including a kitchen, several bedrooms, a master ensuite, and a change room. The kitchen area is centrally located and appears to be the focus of the text overlay. The text is overlaid on the floor plan in a way that makes it stand out.

## MISTAKE #4

# Bad Kitchens Have Bad Layouts: How To Find Your Perfect Kitchen Layout

# Squeeze As Much Out Of Your Space As Possible

After not spending enough money, next up on the list of big kitchen mistakes is getting the layout of your kitchen wrong.

This is all about working within your defined space and squeezing as much out of its potential as possible. I've seen some real howlers when it comes to layouts, so here are some tips and tricks for finding the optimum layout for your space.

## The Working Triangle

You may have heard this phrase before. If so, there's a good reason – it's bloody important! The premise of the working (or kitchen) triangle is that the parts of your kitchen that you use the most get put in the same area, traditionally in a triangle shape, so that you can turn from one to the other, to the other, and back again.

The kitchen triangle usually includes the sink, the hob and the fridge, however, it's also popular to include other important appliances close by, turning your triangle into a square or pentagon. For example, you'd want the dishwasher close to the sink so that all dirty plates and utensils gather in the same area. Making sure you group your most-used areas/appliances is a rule of thumb that I would most definitely follow.

## Flow

Flow isn't just a term that fancy interior designers talk about. It's a real thing, and you need to give it some thought. There is nothing worse than having to walk around a daft kitchen peninsula or dodge dining room chairs for the rest of your life, all because you chose to put them in the middle of your flow space.

A flow space or area is the path of the least resistance to your desired destination. For example, we often go to the kitchen sink. If you have to walk around something to get there, it interrupts the flow. The journey from the dining area to the working triangle is a well-trodden path, so making sure your kitchen has an easy flow from space to space is something to think about.

I've seen too many people regret putting in breakfast

bars that never get used or peninsula islands when they haven't quite got enough space to do it, all because they so desperately wanted some form of island. Often, clever storage can resolve the need for an island, but we'll talk about that later.



**Good Layout  
and Flow Leads  
to a Better-  
Designed and  
Happier  
Kitchen!**

At this point, it's good to identify where your main workstation is going to be. Where are you going to do your food preparation? Deciding on that early in the planning phase means you can make better decisions about your working triangle, kitchen layout and all-important flow.

Placing an oven or a fridge in the main flow (where people will likely be walking) is not only an inconvenience but can also be dangerous. No one wants someone walking past when placing items in or out of the oven. The same goes for carrying boiling pots from the hob to the sink for drainage. Carrying dangerous items this far is not only inefficient but also increases the risk of accidents.

Existing internal doors are often not thought about - a door swinging the wrong way can severely impact the usage or flow of your kitchen. In my youth, I owned a house where an internal door would collide with the door of the fridge if you opened them in unison.

Good layout planning and considering flow negates these inefficiencies and leads to a better-designed and happier kitchen!





**MISTAKE #5**

**Mechanical Services:  
Getting Your  
Electrics & Plumbing  
Just Right**

# A Mistake That Can Be Both Disappointing and Costly...

Another common regret, and one that can be both disappointing and costly, is not properly planning the position of services like electrics, plumbing, and waste. This is especially important in projects where you're managing the preparation works yourself, or where a builder is handling it as part of a larger renovation or extension. If your kitchen is being installed as part of a full-service, project-managed fit-out, much of this responsibility typically falls to the installation company. But if you're overseeing the early stages, it's critical to get this right.

One of the biggest issues we see is when homeowners commit to plumbing and electrics too

early, often before consulting an experienced kitchen designer. By the time they reach the design stage, the room may already be plastered and the services fixed in place, all based on an initial layout that was never properly challenged. Then, a far better design is suggested, one that improves flow, functionality, or storage, but the services no longer align.

Electrical planning is particularly important. Different appliances require different power ratings — 13amp, 16amp, 20amp, even 32amp in some cases. You also need to consider the location of sockets and ensure they're accessible, discreet, and don't leave you with a row of unsightly spurs above your worktops.

# And Plumbing Needs The Same Level of Thought...

Plumbing needs the same level of thought. Poor planning can lead to things like water pipes running straight into the space where a dishwasher should go, instead of being correctly routed into the sink cabinet.

The real frustration comes when clients compromise on their kitchen layout, or even settle for less suitable appliances, just to avoid moving services. And the real cost hits when you realise the improved layout is the one you truly want... But now the electrics, plumbing, and waste need to be redone.

**My advice?** Don't lock in services too early. Speak to a kitchen designer before your first fix to ensure your final design is driving the service layout, not the other way around.





**MISTAKE #6**

**How Lighting &  
Storage Can  
Make or Break a  
Kitchen**

# Most People Think of Lighting as Something You Turn on When It's Dark

One of the biggest mistakes you can make when designing a kitchen to last a lifetime is installing both poor lighting and poor storage. Cutting a few corners in this department may seem logical at the time as it can shave a few hundred pounds off the overall cost, but the cost of this error of judgement can be far more than a few pounds.

Let's start by looking at lighting...

## Lighting

Lighting can really make or break a kitchen. Most people think of lighting as something you turn on when it's dark, but it goes much further than that. To design a kitchen that uses light to its advantage, you should think about how it works at all times of day...

A room can seem drab when you can't let enough natural light in. Think about it; it's sunny outside, but it's dark and dank toward the back walls of your kitchen. If you have the option and you're halfway through an extension or large renovation, then think about extra windows, skylights, solatubes, roof lanterns or a Velux window. It's hard to put into words how much difference this can make, not only to

the overall aesthetic but how the room makes you feel. ***Natural light is scientifically proven to be a mood enhancer, so let it in!***

So what happens when it's dark? How's best to light a room then? I like to break lighting down into three areas: Ambient, task and accent. Get familiar with the terminology because it will help you put your ideas across to whoever designs your kitchen.

**Ambient:** This is the overall light that lights the whole room, often from the ceiling or pendants.

**Task:** Illuminating certain work zones so that you can see what you're working on (under-cabinet lights, for example).

**Accent:** Enhancing certain design features, such as plinth lights around the bottom of cabinets or

lighting inside glass cabinets.

Many people try to save money on lighting by only investing in overhead, ambient lighting. It does the job, but a bright light that you can only turn 'on' or 'off' leaves so much room for improvement.



We've all been there: working with a sharp knife, preparing vegetables and we can't quite see well enough. If you think it's bad now, imagine it in ten years when even the best eyesight could start to deteriorate! Installing good task lighting, especially

around your main workspaces, is a very good idea that you'll thank yourself for later.

When all is dark and you're cooking up a storm, shadows can be your worst nightmare. When thinking about lighting, think about shadows and where they might form – be sure to keep these away from your places of high workload. If you're using pendant lights, make sure not to put them too low. Reaching over the island and knocking your head against a pendant is funny when it happens once. **Not so much when it's the tenth time!**

The bonus piece of advice for this part of my kitchen guide is this: put switches where you're most likely to be working (near your work triangle) so that you can control every light in the kitchen from there. Average kitchen designers don't think about this when they

design a kitchen, so it means if you want to turn your task lighting on, you need to walk all the way to the entrance doorway of the kitchen! Whilst this is fine in a small kitchen, it becomes a real problem in a big space, especially when cooking complex, attention-needing meals like stir fry!

As in the previous section of this guide, it's best to plan your lighting early, as this usually falls under the builder's remit. If you're doing an extension, tell your builder exactly what you want, so they can install the correct infrastructure on their 'first fix' (look up first fix and second fix if you are not familiar with these terms. It will help you later). It's almost impossible to put lights in when there is no way to connect them! Bear this in mind for plug sockets – don't forget to have one on the kitchen island, as this is often where

freestanding appliances are used.

## Storage is a real bugbear of mine because of the way in which people use it.

As human beings, we have a tendency to keep things that we don't need. Take any kitchen in any British household and you'll find utensils, gadgets, tools, etc that haven't been used in at least 5 years, yet they are still taking up valuable space in your kitchen!

Most new kitchens are designed with tons of cupboards and drawers. There's so much storage that you need to buy things to fill it up!

As a kitchen designer of 40+ years, **my true pain when it comes to storage is that most people don't think about how it is used.** Let me explain...

Firstly, you must think about the flow of the kitchen on a more micro level than before. Kitchen flow is not only about how you walk around your kitchen, but also how you move items around. On a very simple level, you want to store your pans as close as possible to your hob so you can lift them out and place them on the heat source in one motion.

When designing a kitchen, think about where everything might go before you decide on what storage options you need. Think about what you currently own and what you use in your kitchen. If you find this hard, go for a walk around your kitchen and envision yourself cooking. Write a list of what sort of implements you're using the most. Hell, go and cook an actual meal tonight and write the list while you're doing it. This will give you a great idea of what you need close to your working triangle and what can be housed a little further away.



Think about making things easy for yourself. For example, one of the most frequented cupboards is the mug cupboard. You don't want your mugs and tea cups too far away from your tea/coffee zone, and you probably don't want to have to bend down for them either, so put them up high somewhere. You'll thank yourself in ten years when

you're not quite as young as you are now!

### ***Cupboard or drawers?***

**Now, that's a question.**

**The best option here is to have a good mix of both, and I'll tell you why.**

#### **Drawers**

Drawers are great for housing a whole load of things. They can be pulled out, and everything is immediately seen and accessible. However, they need to be organised. An unorganised drawer is like a migraine. You just want it to go away!

Drawers are more expensive than cupboards and aren't always practical in smaller kitchens, so beware of this if you aren't blessed with space & budget. Weight restrictions depend on the quality of the drawer – some can bear heavy loads, and they're not only great for crockery, but

you can also store dry foods in here too!

#### **Cupboards**

Cheaper than drawers, cupboards can be a great option if used properly. From an aesthetic point of view, cupboards and open shelving combine nicely for that warm and inviting classic look. They work brilliantly in small and awkward spaces and have more internal storage capacity than drawers because they occupy the full dimensions of the kitchen unit.

However, you must also put some thought into how you use your cupboards. Storing larger appliances like slow cookers, blenders and mixers in them is a great idea. Coming up with ideas to utilise the vertical space is also smart. For instance, most kitchens have at least 4-5 chopping boards. Laying these flat in a

cupboard is a disastrous use of space, but inserting a vertical divider to store them on their side makes things much tidier and means no wastage of vertical space.

Storage can become very clever. If you're reading this, you've probably already done some hefty kitchen research and noticed that many modern kitchens contain space-age storage features – high-up, pull-down shelves for storing things near the ceiling, le mans-style corner storage, push-to-open handleless cupboards and drawers, and button-push motorised cupboard doors. They're all brilliant to look at and work fantastically, but let me tell you this...

**As a rule of thumb, any piece of hardware in your kitchen that contains moving parts or clever mechanisms is prone, at some time in the future, to be temperamental or even break. Always invest in the best you can afford, as quality is everything.**



**MISTAKE #7**

**Cooking Is More  
Enjoyable When You  
Have Space To  
Work**

# One of the biggest regrets: not having enough space to cook!

In this section, we're looking at one of the biggest kitchen regrets there ever was: not having enough space to do the cooking!

Now, this impacts different people in different ways, but the ones who like cooking and hosting, or those who have large households and busy mealtimes, seem to come off worst.

Organising day-to-day meals is usually quite straightforward, and only a normal amount of worktop space is required to do this. You need an area to organise all the ingredients, a place to prep the food (peeling, chopping, etc), an area to serve your meal onto plates and a place to put dirty pans and utensils (sometimes these go straight into the dishwasher).

**But when cooking becomes a bigger task than simply feeding the kids on a Friday night, cooking can become quite a stressful experience if you haven't got enough room to do it.**



Everyone's experienced what it's like to prep vegetables in a space the size of an A4 sheet of paper. And most people know what it's like to play kitchen Tetris whilst scrambling around trying not to burn things or trying to find a space for a hot pan when it's starting to burn your fingers!

Planning a kitchen with insufficient workspace can leave you tearing your hair out, especially when you have invested a large sum of money.

### **But It's Not Just Cooking You Need To Worry About...**

As time progresses, kitchens become multi-use rooms. A lot of work that isn't cooking gets done in the kitchen. Whether it's homework or work projects that have overrun. Whether it's planning a new holiday or complicated life admin, it

often gets done around practical workspaces: the kitchen. More often than not, these other tasks coincide with the cooking, meaning some surplus workspace becomes more valuable than ever.



**Poor Storage  
Leads To Poor  
Workspace,  
Leads To Poor  
User  
Experience**

In this part of the report, we get some insight into why the previous section on storage is so important.

Getting your storage wrong results in larger appliances taking up room on work surfaces. For example, many people have utility rooms, which are perfect for housing the microwave. If you need to keep the microwave in the kitchen, look to get it off the work surface (talk to a kitchen designer about getting it built into your kitchen). The same can be said for mixers that are left out permanently when they are only used every now and then.

If you can crack the storage conundrum, it leads to larger worktop spaces, which is one of the biggest factors in improving your all-around kitchen experience.

## Quick Tip

**Quick Tip:** Grab a pen and paper and write a list of all the freestanding (not integral or permanently fitted into the kitchen) appliances you want to keep in your new kitchen. Think about where you might want each piece to live and take that to your kitchen design consultation. Your designer will take this into account and design the kitchen with storage for those appliances in mind, meaning you won't be guessing how much storage space you'll need. It's always best to put in a little more storage space than you need right now, as you don't know what you may accumulate in the future, but it's foolish to have so much storage that you need to buy unnecessary things to fill it and sacrifice workspace!

## MISTAKE #8

Prioritising Design  
Trends Over Tried &  
Tested Approaches

# Trends are fleeting...



Kitchen design trends come and go, but not all of them stand the test of time. What looks stylish on Instagram or in a showroom doesn't always translate into a practical, long-lasting kitchen. Many homeowners fall into the trap of prioritising aesthetics over function, only to regret their choices once the reality of daily use sets in.

All of my designers talk about two words when they're designing kitchens for our customers. Those words? 'Form' and 'Function'. It's a conversation that never gets overlooked because every part of the kitchen should be judged by these two things.

**Form** | How it looks. The visual appeal of an object, space, or design (e.g., style, colour, materials).

**Function** | How it works. The practical use and efficiency of the design (e.g., usability, durability, comfort).

And that's the crux of this section: how it looks vs how it performs. I want my kitchen to look the part as much as the next person. I'm not flashy, but on some level, I take personal pride in hosting friends and family in my nice kitchen. It feels good to show it off. I find this is high on the agenda for almost everyone embarking on a kitchen renovation project, whether they say it or not. It's only natural, after all.

The problem with following the latest trends in design is that trends are fleeting. They are more fleeting now than they have ever been. Yes, trends have always been a thing, but in the social media world, they move faster and are more numerous than ever before. 90% of them look incredible, but the unfortunate reality is that you never get any insight into how they perform for

the user over a 10-15 year period!

Of course, this all depends on your objectives for your new kitchen. If your heart is set on having a kitchen that is truly stunning to the eye, then you may disagree with this section entirely! But if, like me, you want to get true value and longevity from your investment, then this section should help you.



# Maintenance Issues

Most people don't like to do lots of maintenance on their homes. It's something that always gets put to the bottom of the list. So, if you had a kitchen that required minimal maintenance, you'd probably be happy, right?

One of the hardest things to design against is time. Wear and tear is a natural occurrence of using a kitchen, and the harder you use it, the more wear there is. Some of the examples I'm going to share below are from recent trends that look great, but in the medium to long term will be problematic for the occupant...

## Open Shelving

The Instagram dream and the homeowners' nightmare. Open shelving certainly looks the part and can add a focal feature to any interior setting. You've even got the opportunity to change what's on it to keep a fresh aesthetic.

But really? You don't have to think for very long to

spot the glaring issue here. No matter how hard you try and how well you clean, it's hard to keep on top of dust. It just never stops coming back! One day, you'll live to regret open shelving.



## Marble Worktops

The great Italian stone, Marble, is put upon a pedestal. But install it at your peril. Not only is it expensive, but it needs to be properly sealed every 6–12 months to protect against stains.

Being a natural material, it's porous, which means it can soak up liquids like wine, coffee and oil that cause irremovable stains. It's also prone to chipping and can suffer from thermal shock. My advice is to keep to Granite or Quartz.





MISTAKE #9

Your Appliances  
Matter More Than  
You Think!

# Pick a strong support crew...

Your kitchen is only as good as the appliances you choose. They are the workhorses of your kitchen, yet many homeowners either overspend on high-tech appliances they never fully use or underspend on products that do not deliver. We're going to delve into some of the biggest regrets when it comes to kitchen appliances.



## Ovens at the Wrong Height

One of the most common mistakes is installing an oven at the wrong height. Many people place them too low, which leads to unnecessary bending and strain when lifting heavy dishes. On the other hand, double-stacked ovens that are too high can make the top unit difficult to use safely. The best approach is to position the main oven at a comfortable waist or chest height to make access easier and safer.

## Overpaying for High-Tech Features You'll Never Use

Another regret is spending money on high-tech appliances with advanced settings and functions that never get used. Many homeowners buy an oven with steam cooking, a smart fridge with app connectivity, or a coffee machine with countless settings, only to use the same basic functions every day. While premium appliances can enhance a kitchen, usability should always take priority over gimmicks. If you don't take the time to learn how to use an appliance to its full potential, the extra cost is wasted.

# Underinvesting in Everyday Appliances

At the same time, people often underinvest in the appliances they use most. They may buy an expensive oven but opt for a budget dishwasher that struggles to clean properly or a cheap extractor fan that doesn't clear cooking smells effectively (more on this in the next section!). A well-performing hob, a reliable dishwasher, and a quiet but powerful extractor fan will impact daily life far more than a fridge with a built-in touchscreen.

# Forgetting About Noise Levels

Noise levels are another overlooked factor. An excessively loud extractor fan, a buzzing fridge, or a noisy dishwasher can disrupt the entire living space, especially in open-plan kitchens. Many homeowners regret not checking noise ratings before purchasing, only to be frustrated by an appliance that constantly hums in the background. Choosing low-decibel models, particularly for dishwashers and extractor fans, can make a significant difference in maintaining a peaceful environment.

# Choosing a Gas Hob Over Induction

Gas hobs are another common source of regret. Gas hobs may offer good heat control and a traditional cooking experience, but they can be a nightmare to clean. The raised burner grates and pan supports trap grease and food spills, making them difficult to wipe down. Scrubbing around burners, removing rings, and dealing with burnt-on stains quickly turns into a time-consuming chore. Over time, metal components can also discolour and wear, making even a well-maintained gas hob look tired.

Today's recognised alternative is an induction hob, which has a smooth, flat surface that can be wiped clean in seconds—no gaps, no grates, and no burnt-on mess. Because induction heats only the pan, spills don't bake onto the surface, unlike gas or ceramic hobs. They're safer to use and heat up quicker than gas hobs, making them a better choice for most kitchens.



**MISTAKE #10**

**Underestimating  
the Importance of  
Ventilation &  
Extraction**

# Avoid smells, grease build up, and condensation.

One of the biggest regrets in kitchen design is underestimating the importance of proper ventilation. A weak or poorly placed extractor fan results in lingering cooking smells, grease buildup, and condensation issues.

There are two ways for any extractor to work. Either they recirculate air through a filter and back into the room, or they are ducted through a pipe through an external wall and the cooking fumes are pushed outside. Like anything, each of these options has its pros and cons. Here's my advice...

If you have the option,

always choose a ducted extractor. The difference in performance is noticeable — ducted systems vent air outside, meaning less condensation, better air quality, and less ongoing maintenance. Recirculating extractors, on the other hand, simply move the air around the room. While they can handle odours reasonably well using carbon filters, they do little to tackle moisture or airborne grease.

It's worth noting that carbon filters don't last forever. They need replacing every 12–18 months, depending on usage. You can't stockpile them either — even unused filters have a limited shelf life because the carbon gradually loses its ability to absorb smells. Some advanced filters can be reactivated by heating them in the oven, which extends their lifespan, but these tend to cost more upfront.

## Don't skimp on extraction...

Regardless of the type, all extractors should come with metal grease filters. These help trap airborne grease and are usually dishwasher-safe, making regular cleaning easy and important.

The power of the extractor also plays a key role. This is measured in cubic metres of air moved per hour. If you're designing an open-plan space or a larger kitchen, don't skimp here — an underpowered extractor will leave the room feeling stale and can allow smells and grease to linger. A good-quality extractor should be powerful enough to quickly clear the air, especially if you cook regularly.

## Noise is another important factor.

Extractor noise is measured in decibels (dB), and generally, the cheaper the extractor, the louder it will be. If it's too noisy, chances are you won't use it as often as you should. Choosing a quieter model can make a big difference to your comfort while cooking.

Finally, think carefully about the extractor's design. Hidden or built-in extractors can look sleek but may lead to more condensation inside surrounding cabinets, especially if you cook with pans frequently. Chimney-style hoods tend to be more effective at removing steam and condensation before it has a chance to cause damage. And don't forget the simplest trick of all: using lids on your pans helps reduce condensation dramatically.

# Where To Go From Here...

Designing your perfect kitchen is not straightforward, but if there's one regret I hear more than any other, it's people wishing they'd spoken to a proper kitchen designer sooner. And I don't mean someone in a trade counter who dabbles in software — I mean a professional who lives and breathes kitchen design and understands how to turn ideas into practical, stunning spaces.

You've now seen the biggest design mistakes and how to avoid them — but the smartest step you can take next is to sit down with someone who's done this thousands of times before. That's exactly what the free design consultation is for...

We offer a free 30-minute design consultation, no pressure, no commitment — just a chance to talk through your ideas with an experienced kitchen designer either on the phone, on a video call or in our Gillingham showroom.

There's no pressure and no obligation — just a chance to get clarity, avoid costly mistakes, and move forward with confidence. My team has years of experience designing kitchens that are not only stunning but also highly functional, so it's a great opportunity.

## What Can You Expect from a Free 30-Minute Design Consultation?

# 1. Questions for us.

Questions for us. If you're looking for a kitchen design, you probably already have some questions. Whether it's about layout, appliances, storage, or materials, we'll address the specific concerns that matter to you.

# 2. Questions for you.

Questions for you. We will ask you some questions. Asking questions is how we start getting the foundations for your kitchen right. Thinking clearly about the answers will help you build a solid foundation for your design.

# 3. Guidance.

Guidance. Your kitchen's size, layout, and usage needs are unique to your home and lifestyle. We'll draw on our experience to help you make smart choices that work for you.

# 4. Clarity.

Clarity. We'll help you to get really clear on where to start and what to prioritise. If you're unsure about the next steps in your kitchen project, we'll help you focus on what really matters and provide clarity on the steps to completion.

There's no obligation to do business with us after this call – this is just a chance to pick the brain of an expert, refine your ideas, and move forward with confidence.

To book your free design consultation with my company, Ream Interiors, visit...

**[www.ream.co.uk/consultation](http://www.ream.co.uk/consultation)**

If there's one thing I hope you take away from this, it's that good kitchen design isn't just about what looks great today – it's about what will work for you every single day for years to come. So take your time, think practically, and invest in the kitchen you truly deserve.

I hope you've enjoyed reading, and good luck with your kitchen project.

*Peter Cross*

**Peter Cross | MD & Owner, Ream Interiors**

**P.S.** The design consultation really is free, and you can go to **[www.ream.co.uk/consultation](http://www.ream.co.uk/consultation)** to book it. We'd love to help!



# What our customers say about US...

*“Our designer, Paul, put together a design that understood our needs and wishes. We’d had ideas of where things should go but Paul’s experience was what shone through here. We were grateful for his help, I don’t think we could have come up with a kitchen design as good.”*

**Nicola Herridge**

*“From start to finish, our experience with Ream was everything we could have hoped for. Paul, our designer, listened to our ideas and truly brought them to life. We wanted a contradictory retro-modern-classic feel - dark yet with vibrant pops of colour. It’s a wonderful place to cook and even a great spot to work from home.”*

**Simon Bracken**

*“Lucy spent alot of time with us to design our dream kitchen and her attention to detail made our kitchen ideal in every way. She gave us alot of ideas when doing the design and made the design process flawless.”*

**Shalini Gujral**

[www.ream.co.uk/consultation](http://www.ream.co.uk/consultation)