

Get started *(pages 2 & 3)*

Our family's 'must haves':

Our family's 'wish list':

Number of bedrooms:

Number of bathrooms:

Other important features for us:

Our budget range:

Tips:

Make sure your 'must have' list includes features that save on running costs and enhance resale value, like good insulation and an efficient hot water system.

Think about how often your family might use a formal living or dining area before you add them to your 'must have' list.

Consider making spaces adaptable to meet future needs, like a change in family arrangement.

Perhaps one larger room shared between two, or a temporary separator that could be removed later, to make the space useable for another function or family configuration in the future.

Plan Your Budget *(pages 4 & 5)*

What are the unknown costs we should allow extra money for, such as more excavation for hitting rock?

What are the items that we should make sure are costed in, for example quality double glazed windows?

Should we save on energy supply charges by going all electric?

Can we upgrade the hot water service to a heat pump?

Can we upgrade to an induction hotplate?

Should we install a PV-powered system and battery now or later, and what sized system can we afford?

Will the bedrooms be able to be adjusted in the future to suit adult children or aging parents?

Our future-proof 'must haves':

Tips:

Don't over-commit with finance - plan for some items, which can easily be delayed, to be installed later.

Budget for all costs involved - don't forget the legal costs, stamp duty, removalist fees, etc.

Insure the property prior to exchanging contracts and consider taking out 'mortgage insurance' to the total of your debt – this will make sure that if anything should happen to you, your debt will be repaid and your dependents' future secured.

Choose where to live *(pages 6 & 7)*

Suburbs or estates our family is considering:

Will we be able to walk or cycle to everything we need – shops, schools, parks, public transport, etc.?

Our location 'must haves':

Best location for us would be:

Will we be able to position a home on our block so it has good access to sun, ideally with the long side or back facing true north (or close to true north)?

Will any neighbouring buildings have an effect on our blocks' privacy, views or access to winter sun?

Best block for us:

Tip:

Check the bus and train routes near your preferred location – how long will it take to walk to the nearest bus stop or train station?

Choose your home *(pages 8 & 9)*

Homes our family is considering:

Our preferred home:

Is it a functional and not over-sized floor plan, without wasted space and with plenty of storage?

What would we change about this plan?

Can we avoid the expense of air conditioning by using natural ventilation, shading and ceiling fans instead?

Will our preferred home fit well on our block with living areas facing north (or close to north)?

Tips:

Find out from your local council/authority if there are incentive schemes available for solar and energy efficiency improvements.

Talk to your Expert about making no cost or low cost changes – for example, can you flip or rotate the plan?

If you have a steeply sloping block, choose a split-level or raised floor design.

Consider features that make your home safe and easy to live in as you get older.

Consider whether you need a spare bedroom or whether a living space or existing bedroom could be used for guests.

Choose your home *(pages 10 & 11)*

The star rating of our home will be: (7 stars or more?)

Have we included the best insulation under roofs, in ceilings and in walls? Do we need floor insulation?

Are our north-facing windows facing the ideal location and shaded by eaves or overhangs that are deep enough?

Are our east and west-facing windows shaded by adjustable shutters?

Do we need high-performance glass or double glazing?

Will we use curtains with pelmets to help keep in heat?

Comments, things we'd like to change about our home design:

Tips

Add extra doors to close off rooms to reduce your heating and cooling costs.

Check if your ceilings will be high enough to have ceiling fans – this can help save your energy costs.

If you have views to the west, east or south, use small picture windows to capture the view while minimising unwanted heat loss or gain.

If you choose a style without eaves, be aware that you'll want to include additions like adjustable external window shutters to keep your home cool in summer.

Make sure your Expert includes sarking under the roofing – this material reflects heat, and provides some insulation and water resistance.

Work with your Expert *(pages 12 & 13)*

The living areas we need are:

Can our living areas be opened up or closed as needed, for economical heating and cooling?

Will our living areas get plenty of sunlight in winter?

Will our living areas be shaded in summer?

Can windows be opened on more than one side of living areas to let cooling breezes through?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Will we use the home office a lot?

Will it be a sunny, pleasant place to work?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Tips:

Add extra doors between areas to allow them to be zoned. This will help reduce heating and cooling.

If using a burnished or polished concrete floor, make sure it is primed and sealed with a natural oil sealer.

Work with your Expert *(pages 14 & 15)*

Is our kitchen set out so there is easy reach between different activities?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Will our bathrooms and laundry have a window for natural ventilation?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Can we swap some rooms around so the bedrooms will be cooler in summer?

Are the bedrooms big enough to accommodate a future study desk, independent students or aging parents?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Tips:

Before signing a contract with a builder, refer to the supplementary checklist 'Before signing a contract and building'.

It is standard for many builders to use a chemical barrier for termite protection. While it may cost a little extra, consider using stainless steel mesh barriers instead and add this to your building contract.

Select heating and cooling *(pages 16 & 17)*

Do we have a north-facing roof for solar hot water or solar power (PV)?

Type of hot water system we're looking for:

What other good design features (such as extra insulation) could we lock in to avoid or reduce our energy bills?

Can we use fans and/or does our air conditioner have a high star rating for both heating and cooling?

How can we save further on heating and cooling?

Will we use electricity from our PV panels in our home before exporting any excess to the grid?

Comments, things we would like to change:

Tips:

Avoid in-slab heating and consider fans instead of air conditioning.

If you're planning to use air conditioners for heating and cooling, choose one with a high star rating.

If you're planning on central heating or air conditioning make sure it's zoned and not oversized.

The compressor unit of an air conditioner can be noisy so think carefully about where to locate it.

Select fittings and appliances *(pages 18 & 19)*

Does our home design make good use of natural light?

Our lighting requirements are:

Ways we can save on lighting costs are:

Have we chosen fixtures that will save water? For example, do our bathrooms and laundries have 3-star showerheads, 4-star toilets and 3+ star taps?

The energy star rating of our fridge is:

The water star rating of our washing machine is:

Our other major energy-using appliances are:

Tips:

Don't use downlights. Lighting a room with many energy saving downlights can use more energy than a single inefficient light and put holes in your ceiling insulation.

Install an outdoor clothesline – let the sun dry your clothes for free instead of paying to run a clothes dryer.

Select colours and finishes *(pages 20 & 21)*

The types of flooring in our home will be:

The timbers used in our home will be:

Do our kitchen and laundry cupboards use low emission particle board and finishes?

Will the paints and varnishes used in our home be healthy?

Have we specified materials that are either low emission or natural products?

Examples of colour schemes that we like are:

Tips:

Make sure timber used in your home comes from certified sustainably managed forests – check with suppliers that the timber boards are both sourced and made in Australia.

Consider alternative options like recycled timber flooring – these are stylish, durable and environmentally friendly.

Check that cupboards, floor finishes, paints and varnishes are either natural or low emission products.

If you use predominantly light, neutral colours in permanent finishes like tiles, you can use colour accents in features that are easier to change, like painted walls.

Select outdoor areas *(pages 22 & 23)*

Will our alfresco areas get sun in winter and be cool and shady in summer?

Where should we plant trees to provide summer shade?

Who is our local nursery person that we can ask about native trees that can cope with hotter summers and long dry periods in our location?

Will we use local native plants, drought-resistant plants and mulch in our garden, to save water?

Will we grow our own vegetables and herbs?

How many litres will our rainwater tank hold?

What fixtures will our rainwater tank be plumbed in to?

Can our driveway be made of permeable pavers?

Comments, things we'd like to change:

Tips:

If you don't want one big rainwater tank you could try a series of smaller, connected tanks.

When planting trees take care to place them so their roots won't damage walls or footings.

Choose 'permeable' paving that allows rain to soak through or between the pavers.

Don't mulch above the termite protection layer, as this will create a pathway for termites into the framing.

Finish-off *(pages 24 & 25)*

Will we be able to gain access to our building site while it is being built, or do we need to complete a site safety induction?

Who is a suitable person we could ask to do the final inspection with us?

Have we downloaded or created a comprehensive list to guide us through what we should look for in each room? For example check that all sliding doors and windows work, check insulation is laid properly in the roof, etc.

Have we sent the Builder a complete list of all the repairs that need to be made before we pay the final payment?

Have we got a folder with all the operating manuals and warranty documents?

Tips:

Get a qualified expert to use a ladder to check for insulation in the roof space and cracks in the plaster.

Use an electrical appliance to check that every power point works.

Flush toilets, fill the bathtub and laundry tub, run the showers (including the hot water), and turn taps on at full pressure to check for any leaks and to make sure the flow and drainage all works, particularly around showers.