

STEP 4 choose your plan

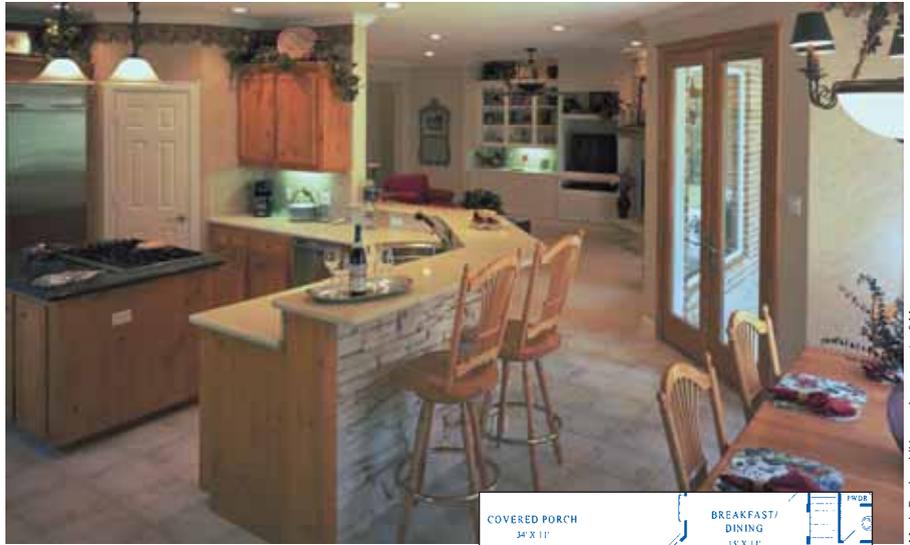
Begin with your lifestyle needs.

Finding the perfect plan may be time consuming, but it's key to the success of building a home. If you're not in love with the final product, even if it's only on paper, you won't be committed to seeing it through to reality. You may already have a picture in your mind of what your dream home looks like. It's important, however, to ask yourself a series of questions that can help you choose a plan that works for you. The answers will provide direction for finding the home you need, not just the home you want.

First, ask the lifestyle questions. Are you single or married? Do you have small children or will you in the future? If so, will each child require a separate bedroom or will they share rooms? How many bathrooms are necessary to adequately fulfill the day-to-day needs of the family? Do you have parents who may be living with you in the future? Do out-of-town

visitors often stay overnight? Do you frequently work at home? How often do you entertain? Do you require separate formal and casual spaces for different occasions? The answers to these questions may indicate the floor plan that best suits the way you live.

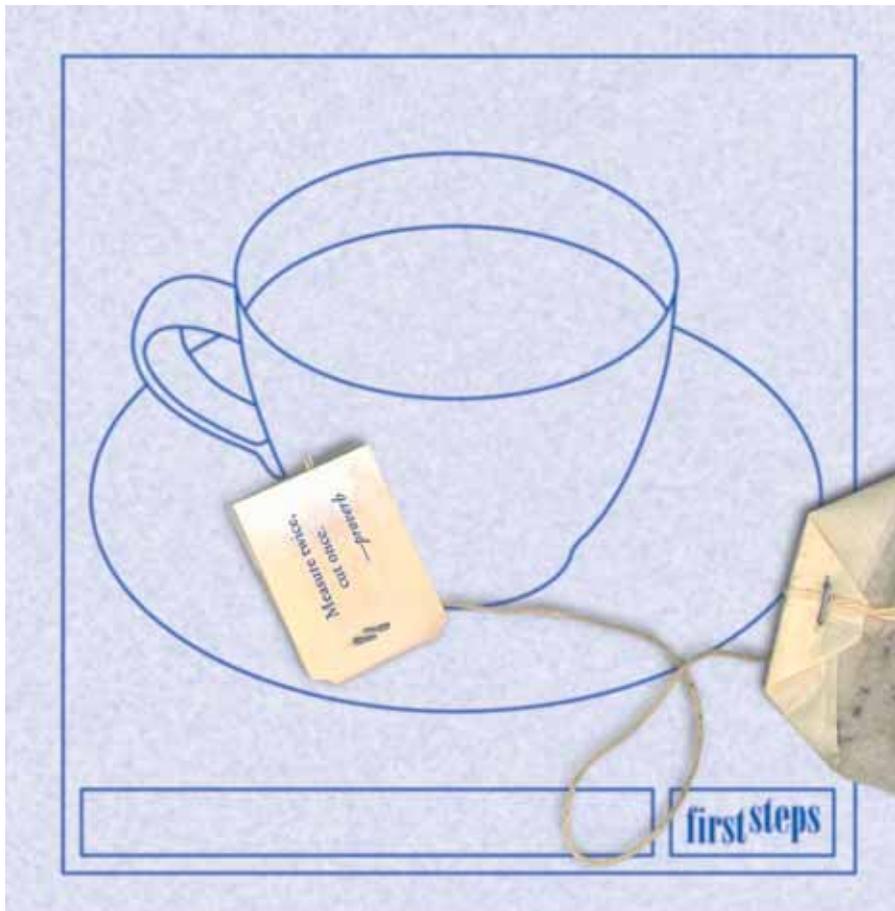
For example, answers to the first few questions help determine the number of bedrooms and baths you need, arguably the most important element of a floor plan. If you have elderly parents or frequent overnight guests, you may want to consider a



Mark England/Homeplans, part of Move



If your entertaining habits are casual, you may opt for a common room adjoining an open kitchen.



floor plan with a separate guest suite, which includes a private bath or private access to a full bath.

Answering the question about how often you work at home can determine whether a plan with a designated home office, study or quiet computer alcove is a smart investment. Answers to questions about how you entertain can help you decide what types of common rooms you'll need. If you enjoy entertaining on a grand scale, you may want a set of formal rooms (formal living and dining rooms or a library, for instance) that provides the space and the proper atmosphere for such occasions.

If your entertaining habits are more casual, you may opt for a large family room adjoining an open kitchen instead. Many people today choose plans that feature a central Great Room, the character of which can change from formal to casual to suit your entertaining mood.

Next, ask yourself what kinds of activities you enjoy. Are you an indoor or an outdoor person? If you prefer spending time inside, choose a plan with features that enhance your leisure time: a fireplace, space for media equipment, a hobby room or a studio, or a gourmet kitchen. If you can't resist the call of the great outdoors, consider a plan with an open porch, a screened porch, a deck, a terrace or some other space that functions as an outdoor living room. Does the plan allow

enough lawn area for children to use for outdoor games and sports? If gardening is your passion, consider the benefits of a plan featuring a mudroom near the utility room and a half-bath, for quick-and-easy cleanup. Or, choose a floor plan that offers multiple outdoor views overlooking the grand landscape or your handiwork in the garden.

Finally, the geographical features of your lot, if you've already purchased one, may determine the home best suited to it. A narrow lot usually calls

for a design that rises up instead of spreading out. A wide, shallow lot, on the other hand, is perfect for a one-story rambler. A sloping lot offers you the chance to build a home with a daylight (walk-out) basement or an inconspicuous, tuck-under garage. For a scenic lot, you may want a design that offers outdoor spaces like decks or porches providing a panoramic view.

Keeping the above factors in mind will help you select the perfect lot for your new home. 🏠

Your life, your home. Use this handy worksheet to get a handle on which home plan is the best for you.

Are you married?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Do you have children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	How many?
Other family members living with you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	How many?
No. of bedrooms needed			
No. of baths needed			
Frequent overnight visitors?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	How many?
Do you work at home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
How many times per week do you entertain?	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 or fewer	<input type="checkbox"/> 3–4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 or more
Do you need separate formal and casual spaces?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Where do you spend more leisure time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Indoors	<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors	
Which hobbies or activities require special rooms or spaces?			
Is your lot narrow, good for a two-story home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is your lot shallow, good for a ranch-style home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does your lot slope?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Should your home be built to make the most of a particular view?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

save money from the start

How can you save money while you're pondering which home plan to buy? By paying close attention to the designs—both the exteriors and the floor plans. Keep your eyes peeled for these cash-gobbling elements:

Unnecessary jogs and angles on the exterior will cost you money you might not be willing or able to spend. Complicated rooflines—intended to add “visual interest”—will also add to your bottom line. Homes that aren't saddled with the task of outdoing the Joneses will usually have simplified truss and framing systems, so they'll save you money from the start.

If you love volume ceilings, look for two-story—or at least consistent—ceilings, rather than staggered heights

throughout a floor. For volume, specify truss systems that create tray ceilings, giving the effect of higher ceilings without requiring higher walls, which drive up your costs.

Choose a floor plan that uses leftover space smartly. Common solutions to this problem are niches, alcoves and extra storage spaces like cabinets and closets.

Straight-run stairs are easier and cheaper to build than double-backs (U-shaped) or curved stairs.

Does the plan you're considering allow for plumbing runs to be shared; e.g., are bathrooms situated back-to-back? This will save you money up-front and in potential maintenance costs.