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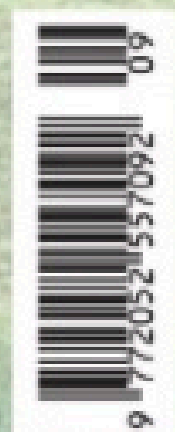
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KITCHEN LAYOUTS: SIZING UP YOUR SPACE

Always leave at least a metre of walkway space between runs of units, such as your worktop and island or peninsula counters. For an area where seating is located, consider space for pulling out a chair. Likewise, think about how unit and appliance doors open to avoid blocking a walkway.

Kitchen counters and island heights typically match. The UK standard is 91cm from the floor, but bespoke options can be made to meet specific measurements. Breakfast bars can be the same height as an island or peninsula, or raised for visual interest – 110cm works well.

Standard appliances are 60cm in width and 60cm deep. Small-space versions are typically around 45cm, while larger appliances, such as range cookers and American-style fridge-freezers, can go beyond a metre. Bespoke kitchens can be designed to accommodate these models.

The standard worktop depth is 60cm, but this can vary greatly depending on the design and placement. You'll typically see a standard thickness of 4cm. If you want a statement ultra-thin or ultra-thick option, they go either end of the scale, with 12mm as the slimmest option available.

Islands should be a minimum 900mm deep for practicality, 1,200-1,500mm is ideal. The length depends on the space.

current trends, all to set a level of expectation. Enquire about previous projects and speak to the clients about their experience. Query any designer who doesn't seem forthcoming – most will be thrilled to show off their work, so if they're not, it could be a red flag. "I think the best question to ask is what the designer would do with the space, ideally before you've given them any kind of preconceptions about what you want, like or don't like," says Matt. "Everyone is different and they might suggest things that you wouldn't do, but I think it's my duty to challenge clients. Even if they ignore my ideas, at least they've had the chance to consider every possibility."

Don't be perturbed by a designer who asks lots of questions – this is a good sign. This could be asking how you use your kitchen on a daily basis; whether you entertain frequently, and if so, how many guests you typically host; what items you store in your kitchen and how accessible you need them to be etc. "This helps me understand how the kitchen needs to function," says Jim Harratt, kitchen designer at Ridgeway Interiors.

The kitchen design process

"The process starts with an initial consultation, I'll take a full brief and put together a concept," says Matt. The kitchen company will visit your property to take detailed measurements, or just work from your architect's plans. After this, detailed drawings, scaled plans and 3D renders will be presented and you'll have the opportunity to make changes until you're happy. It's crucial to amend plans at this stage, rather than later, to avoid extra costs and delays. "You should be brutally honest at this point. There is no value in being coy," says Jim. "There will also be a run-through of the costs to allow the client to make value judgements about appliances and finishes etc."

A kitchen designer will typically liaise with your builder to ensure they can measure the final site and discuss timescales, and then you'll receive final documentation including technical drawings to assist contractors. "We will arrange a final sign off meeting where we'll take you through all the documents and ask you to approve the



Above: A series of Velux rooflights along the side return addition to this open-plan kitchen, designed by Hux alongside Zulufish, illuminate the space from above. Bespoke designs by Hux start from £60,000

Left: Shepherd Hills designed, crafted and fitted this kitchen from their Contemporary range, which is made entirely from hardwood. The glass cabinets with ash shelves and the quartz worktop and splashback create points of visual interest

final design. Once the site is ready, we will schedule a visit to complete a final survey and establish that the site is ready for installation," says Tom Howley, creative design director at his eponymous kitchen company.

Getting the right layout

Open-plan layouts continue to dominate what designers are asked for. "By removing walls that would have acted like a barrier, the natural light from your windows or rooflights can spread to more of your home, making a brighter and airier space," says Tom. "If the room is open plan, will you include a dining area? If so, consider adding an island with built-in storage in order to maximise space."

Not all kitchens are open-plan with vast island units. Refer back to your wish list and exact storage, appliance and lifestyle needs and find a layout to suit. From L, U, G-shape configurations to galley kitchens for smaller spaces, there are many other options. Prioritise features that are important to you and be prepared to sacrifice something for the good of the design. "Less is usually more," says Jim. "An island in too small a space won't look right, and running everything around the perimeter of the room makes it feel small. A peninsula off a wall can make the same space feel bigger, while functioning brilliantly if the wall and ceiling space is well-utilised."

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