

## The house building checklist

Building a house can become a nightmare if the process isn't monitored closely. It is important to keep in close contact with the builder throughout the building process to ensure the construction is going to plan.

To help avoid costly mistakes as you build your house, take a look at the construction checklist below. This checklist might also be useful for major renovations as well.

### Do the numbers

Chat to your mortgage broker about a construction loan pre-approval to know what you can spend on building your home. There is nothing worse than coming up a little bit short on your dream home!

### When choosing the builder

The builder will literally make, or break your home so you want to make sure you have taken time to check their background, and references. This is also where a Builder Broker can help make this process much easier.

- Check builder's references for new homes constructed
- Check internet for feedback on builder, comments in news
- Land selection + Location requirements met
- Council enquiry regarding future plans and development for the area, restrictions

### What to look for in the construction contract

A building contract will look pretty foreign to most people, especially if you haven't built a home before. And it's hard to know what should be, or shouldn't be in your construction contract. This list should help!

- Provide a copy of the new home building contract to your lawyer or solicitor and get their input
- Provide a copy to your home loan provider who is going to give you the construction loan
- Check for restrictions and covenants
- Prepare your own list of things that you want in your home and compare with the contract for building your new house. You might want some of these included in the construction contract:
  - » Home warranty insurance
  - » Electricity connection, capacity for future additions
  - » Natural gas connection, if available
  - » Footpaths along street
  - » Driveway and footpath to front door
  - » Paving to clothes hoist + Patio
  - » Nature of finish to concreted areas - pattern paving? colour?
  - » Garage or car port
  - » Alarm system + Telephone connection + Telephone internal wiring to multiple points + TV antenna + Cable TV connection + TV connections to multiple points



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- » Computer network cabling + Intercom with appropriate cabling
- » Remote gate operation with cabling + Video monitoring and cabling
- » Window coverings (this usually gets missed)
- » Storm water storage, means of use - pump included?
- » Electricity and water to detached building, such as a shed
- » Fences around side and rear boundaries (height/material)
- » Fences between front and back yard
- » Landscaping, garden edging
- » Watering systems, timers or computer controlled
- » Provision of garden soil, including lawn areas
- » Removal of rubbish

## Items to double check in the house specifications

The building specifications detail the exact items, appliances and finishes the builder will use in your home. If the builder has said they are going to use 'Italian Appliances' you want to make sure it is the brand you want, and not some cheap imitation.

- Appliances, Make and model, Automatic features, timers and check user reports on internet for each
- Kitchen specifications - drawer slides, cupboard hinges, cabinet heights, bench top material
- Tapware - Check brands and models with local plumbing supply company
- Heating and cooling
- Ducted to which areas, how many points? Air return location
- How many split units? Where? What capacity? Where are the exterior units? Exterior units on a slab?
- Check independently with a retail supplier regarding recommended brands and required capacity
- Hot water system
- Insulation (Check with local council regarding legal requirements and best practice recommendations)
- Walls + Roof + Floor + Floor coverings
- Included in all areas?
- Specifications - check with local suppliers for long lasting, quality products
- Appropriate for each area?
- Wall finishes
- Colours for each room of the house
- Specification for the product used
- Style of cornices, architraves and skirting
- Finish used on natural wood items - stain, number coats of clear finish
- Doors and hardware
- Check brands and models with a service-oriented hardware store
- Dead locks on external doors to the house
- External doors solid and weatherproof
- Security doors - brand and model
- Visit a door supplier and talk about options, see how those being offered by your builder compare with their recommendations
- Window specifications - colonial bars, fly screens, colour
- Nature of pest barriers and protection - check with local council for best practice



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## Things to keep in mind on the house plans

- Elevation of slab compared to surrounding area
- Drainage to low areas with provision for overflow around or away from house
- Offset compared to neighbours
- Access to back yard by foot or vehicle
- Adequate car parking for your family, visitors
- Able to reverse into the street or turn around off street
- Double driveway retains its full width to allow cars to park side by side or get past each other
- Parking areas for recreational vehicles
- Bulky items storage (Christmas tree, etc.) or for garden equipment
- Recreation equipment storage, including bicycles
- Potential for headlights from vehicles on the street to shine on windows
- Ramps vs. steps at entry - anyone with disabilities likely to make regular visits?
- View 'locations' suit natural views
- Sanitary sewer not under driveway if it requires a vent (generally not a good idea to have it under the driveway regardless - it may plug up one day and need to be dug up!
- Outside water taps, water supply for irrigation systems

## What to do while the construction is in progress

Now your build has started its mostly a matter of the builder getting in there and getting the job done... but things can get delayed, so its your job as the owner to make sure the builder sticks with their timeframes to get your home done.

- Periodic site visits, at least once a week.
- Watch for variations from standard plans - if you have made a variation, make sure it's being followed
- When driveway being formed, measure the width before they pour. Use a tape measure.
- Stay in contact with your home construction loan lender regarding progress payments and the associated valuations

## What to do on completion of your new home

- Walk through inspection with notepad and camera
- Look carefully at everything, note down anything that's amiss:
  - » Cracks
  - » Poor finish
  - » Unpainted items
  - » Missing hardwares
  - » Missing inclusions such as ceiling fans, heat lamps, etc
  - » Wrong appliances, controls, type of light fittings
  - » Cupboard doors that don't fit properly
  - » Other doors that don't close properly - catches don't line up with strikers

You will be able to continue to call on the builder to fix things after settlement, but it's best to identify any problems as soon as you are aware of them.



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