



Architects Registration Board

Guidance  
and Information

## You and your architect

In 1997, we were set up by Parliament as the UK's regulator of architects. We are an independent public interest body, with a strong consumer protection role.

This leaflet tells you what you might expect if you are thinking of using an architect for a building project.

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Clarity approved by  
Plain English Campaign

## Choosing an architect

We can't recommend an architect to you, but you can use our website to search for architects in your area. Talking to other people who have had similar work done, and directories such as Yellow Pages or Yell.com are another useful source of information. The professional institutes for architects (Royal Institute of British Architects, Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, Royal Society of Ulster Architects, Royal Society of Architects in Wales) might also be able to help.

By law, anyone who describes themselves as an architect and is involved in designing or constructing buildings, must be properly trained and qualified, and registered with us. If you want to check whether someone is qualified as an architect, use the 'Search the Register' service on our website ([www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk)), or call us free on 0800 389 6221 and we will be pleased to help.

Before you choose an architect, you might want to think about:

- getting an architect who specialises in the type of work you are thinking of doing;
- whether you want an architect from a small or large practice; and
- whether you want an architect with a modern approach to design, or one who is more traditional.

Cost is often a very important factor to consider when choosing an architect. However, it is worth remembering that the cheapest quote may not always be the best value for money. There are many ways of working out fees – for example, they can be fixed fees, percentage cost (this is where the architect's fee is fixed as a percentage of the construction costs) or hourly rates. When you and your architect have agreed how the fees will be worked out, your architect will include this in the contract.

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# You and your architect

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## **Planning what you want the architect to do**

Before you meet with your architect for the first time, it's worth spending some time writing down what you want to achieve. For example, you might want your architect's advice, you might only want them to provide drawings, or you might want them to manage every part of the project for you. Have these notes with you so that you can look over them during the meeting. It is important to give your architect as much information as possible so that they have a clear understanding of what it is you want.

## **The first meeting**

Your architect will want to talk to you about your building project so they understand what you are looking for. You should follow your architect's advice, but if they suggest something that you are not comfortable with, don't be afraid to say so. If you both clearly understand what you want at this early stage, it may prevent problems as the project progresses. It is your project, and your architect will want to make sure that you are satisfied with the end result.

You should also talk to your architect about:

- what their fee will be;
- how often they will update you on the progress of your project;
- keeping you informed of anything which might affect the quality and cost of your project; and
- what information they need from you before they start work – usually you will need to provide some extra information to do with the project, for example, you may need to check deeds, find out who owns a wall, and so on.

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When you have agreed with your architect what you want them to do, they must record the terms of the contract in writing. At the very least, the contract should state:

- how much work you need the architect to do;
- what the fee will be, or how it will be worked out;
- who will be responsible for what; and
- whether there are any special terms for settling disputes.

Your architect must also let you know that you can complain to us if you have a complaint about their conduct or competence that they can't sort out.

### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

Sometimes, you might be unhappy about the progress of a project or some other aspect of the work. If this happens, you should tell your architect straight away. The architect should have their own procedures for dealing with your complaints. Talking to your architect direct is often the quickest and best way to settle a problem. If your architect doesn't know that something is wrong, they won't be able to put it right.

You might find the following advice helpful if you have to make a complaint.

- Check what was said in writing about who was responsible for what, and what the terms and conditions are on the agreement or contract.
- Put your complaint in writing so that both you and your architect have a record of your concerns.
- Ask who will deal with your complaint, and how long it is likely to take before it is settled.

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- Set out the details of your complaint as clearly as you can.
- If you have more than one complaint, list them and give them numbers.
- Keep notes of any meetings you have, and keep copies of any letters you send to your architect.
- Tell your architect how you would like the complaint to be settled. This way, your architect will know what you expect, but remember that your architect may not be able to do what you ask.

If you have followed this advice but you and your architect haven't been able to reach an agreement, you can send your complaint to us. We have a separate form for complaints, which you can fill in online, or we can send you a copy in the post. We can't help you to sort out your complaint with your architect, but we can look at your architect's conduct and competence to see whether it falls below our standards.

We have included details of what to do if something goes wrong as information to help you, but remember that only a very small number of clients complain about their architects. Most projects meet the aims of the client and are finished without anything going wrong.

### **More information**

There is more information on our website at [www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk). If you would like to talk to someone, call us free on 0800 389 6221. You can also write to us, or you can email us on [info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk). We are open from 9am to 5am, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays and public holidays).



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