

## How can I find a reliable fitter?

Buying a new kitchen can be both a stressful and an enjoyable experience. But however hard you work on choosing the kitchen range and getting the design right, the end result can be ruined by a poor fit. Importantly you will need to have a good working relationship with your fitter. This will help to ensure you communicate well and any issues that may arise are dealt with quickly and satisfactorily.

Here are our top tips for finding a fitter who will ensure your finished kitchen looks amazing.

### Where do I start?

Try to find some personal recommendations. Ask around to see if anyone has had a kitchen fitted recently; contact family, friends, colleagues and friends-of-friends - essentially anyone you can think of!

Use social media to reach a wider circle of people, usually if someone has had a good (or a bad) experience they are more than happy to share.

However, remember that while a personal assurance can give you peace of mind it is not a guarantee.

### What other sources can I use?

There are a number of sources you could use to find a fitter; we recommend considering one or more of the following:

- *Local Trades Listings* – most kitchen fitters will work in an area local to where they live and will advertise locally, so look in local community magazines and leaflets. You could also try: Thomson Local ([thompsonlocal.com](http://thompsonlocal.com)) and [Yell.com](http://Yell.com).
- *Kitchen Forums* – there are many online forums where you can advertise for a kitchen fitter and ask questions. Try: [kitchenfittersforum.com](http://kitchenfittersforum.com), [screwfix.com](http://screwfix.com), [checkatrade.com](http://checkatrade.com) and [ratedpeople.com](http://ratedpeople.com).
- *Networking Groups* – there will be groups local to you who may have a kitchen fitter affiliated to them. Talk to local professionals, business owners and trades people, as many will be used to networking. Look out for: Business Networking International (BNI) and 4Networking.
- *Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom and Bathroom Installers (IKBBI)* – this is a non profit organisation that supports professional kitchen fitters, bedroom installers and bathroom installation providers. Search their website – [IKBBI.org.uk](http://IKBBI.org.uk) – to find a member near you.

**Top tip:** Membership of groups and certification bodies usually involve a fee and some have a vetting process. Be aware this is not necessarily a guarantee of a tradesperson's work.

However you find your fitter we recommend you follow our advice below.

### How do I know they'll do a good job, be reliable and trustworthy?

Check out their references. If you haven't had a personal recommendation (and even if you have) ask to see pictures of previous projects and speak to a couple of previous customers. Ask about the quality of the fitters' work, whether any issues were resolved satisfactorily, if the job was finished in good time and how well they tidied up afterwards.

If the fitter can't or won't supply you with details of someone who can vouch for the quality of their work, think twice about using them.

### What questions should I ask?

In order to ensure the fitter is the right person for your project it is important to meet with them and talk face-to-face before you employ them. You need to know who they are, feel comfortable with them and have a good rapport. At the end of the day they will be working in your home and you are likely to need to be able to trust them with keys to your house.

It is also worth finding out a few things before you start:

- *What is their availability?* If they are really busy, this can be a good sign as it shows they are in demand. However, if you are hoping to have your kitchen fitted sooner you may need to look elsewhere.
- *What experience do they have?* It is worth employing a professional kitchen fitter with lots of experience of fitting kitchens, not just general joinery work, as they will know all the tricks of the trade to ensure your kitchen is fully functional as well as looking great.
- *What geographical area do they cover?* This may seem an obvious question, but fitting kitchens is a physically demanding job and many fitters prefer to work in a fairly localised area where they can get to work early without a long journey to start with.
- *What do they think of your design?* This may sound daft, but they will be able to tell you how functional and realistic your kitchen design is; i.e. the services (gas, electrics, water) are in the right place – e.g. extractor fans can be ducted, sinks and dishwashers can be plumbed in and appliances plugged in.
- *What is their quote for your project?* Obviously you will need to obtain a quote. Be cautious about choosing someone who charges a daily rate, as there is no impetus to get the project finished on time.
- *What times do they work?* Many fitters like to start early and finish by dinner time. There may also be occasions when they will work late to complete something, so it's important that you can work out your schedules to be convenient to both of you.
- *What are their arrangements for waste removal?* Removing an old kitchen and fitting a new one creates a lot of waste. Skips are very expensive and will add to the overall project cost. If the fitter is making arrangements for removal of waste you may like to ask to see a copy of a Waste Transfer Note to ensure it is being disposed of legally.

- *Who else do they have on their team?* It is worth finding out if the fitter works independently or is likely to bring other people onto the job, e.g. plaster, tiler and general labourers; as you may not be introduced to them at the initial meeting. After all, they will be working in your house and it's nice to know who will be there, especially if you're not.

### **What else do I need to know?**

A kitchen will almost inevitably require more than joinery work; more than likely there will be plumbing and electrics to be completed. Not all kitchen fitters will have the skills or qualifications to carry out this work. If they don't, you will need to employ further trades people to ensure your kitchen is completed, in full working order and, crucially, safe.

Anyone you employ to carry out gas work in your home, including fitting appliances, must be registered with Gas Safe. This is a certification which is tested and renewed annually. All gas engineers who are registered with Gas Safe will be listed on the Competent Persons Register. You can search this register on the Gas Safe website – [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) – to find a local competent gas engineer or to check out that someone is genuine.

Any electrician you employ to carry out electrics work must be Part P registered with one of the following electrical certification boards: BSi, NICEIC, ELECSA, NAPIT, Certsure, STROMA, BESCA, Benchmark or OFTEC. This is also tested and renewed annually.

And finally, you need to be aware that having a new kitchen fitted is a dirty, disruptive and time consuming project. Even with the best of intentions your house will be dusty. It will take up to 2 weeks (possibly more for a large kitchen) to include time for plaster to dry, worktops to be templated, plumbing, gas and electrics to be completed, and to allow for occasional delays to deliveries. During this time you need to be prepared to 'camp out' in your own home, plan to be without an oven for some of the time and expect to be having takeaways or microwave meals. But remember, at the end of it all it will be worth it!

### **Let us know how you get on**

At Fitakitchen we are compiling a directory for the use of customers looking for a reliable, local kitchen fitter. If you use someone who you would be willing to recommend to other people, please let us know and we will include them in our directory.