

Free Download: Top ten self-build mistakes and how to avoid them.

1. There are always lots of so called experts that will be keen to give you advice and horror stories about self-building. Treat them with caution. This is your dream home, and there are plenty of good news stories too about builds that have gone well – these just don't make the headlines.
2. Try to get an overall concept of your build or what the project involves as a whole, not just the trades like bricklayers, carpenters or plumbers. That way you will have a better idea of the overall costs and its component parts.
3. There are lots of professionals like architects, planners, and structural engineers to name only a few who even before you start your project will take a large percentage of your budget, but 9/10 times you can usually do some of this ground work yourself. Consider going to a company that offers the whole service, from planning permission to full build in house. It's all about asking questions. Pick up the phone to the local planning office, building inspector or a company like ourselves. It's all free advice and you shouldn't have to pay a penny.
4. Beware salesman with glossy brochures. Some of the best builders may not have all the gloss, that you end up paying a premium for anyway. Building homes isn't just words in a book and a fancy show stand, it's about having satisfied customers. Always go to a builder who can supply references and real people living in real homes they have built.
5. Remember, when buying a timber frame, it is just that, the frame. It is not the finished house, even though some will lead you to believe that. Read and re-read the small print and ask the right questions about exactly what is in your package. And don't pay for any timber frame upfront. Agree to pay a percentage as a deposit, some when it is delivered to site and being erected, and the remainder only when NHBC and building control have signed it off.
6. Self build project management doesn't have to be a nightmare, nor does it have to be complicated. Get individual prices from each trade and a clear written agreement of what they will do and when, with penalties for going over time limits. Get everything listed and agreed between trades, especially if you are managing the site yourself. This is KEY!
7. VAT: Remember self-build is VAT free, so why pay that up front only to reclaim it. Use contractors who supply and fix – that way you hold on to your money longer to spend on things during the build, rather than waiting to do a VAT return.
8. Waste materials cleaning up are an issue now, as each trade should be made responsible for cleaning up their own waste. With waste having to be separated before leaving the site this can cost a fortune in skips if you get it wrong.
9. Scaffold who pays? The timber frame erectors? The brickies? The roofers? And so the list goes on with everybody saying they didn't price for it, leaving the customer with an extra bill to find out of the budget.
10. Never, pay out money if the work has not been checked off by a professional body like NHBC or building control. Any work, whether it be day work, price work or main contractor, the moral of the story is never pay a penny until it's been signed off.