

“6 things you need to consider when choosing a kitchen fitter”

By Bill Halliday
Managing Director at Nicholas Hythe Kitchen Design Studio
and kitchen design expert with 25 years' experience

Hello,

As you will know, finding a specialist kitchen fitter that will fit your brand new kitchen to the highest standards and for a reasonable price can be difficult. Along with the design, the quality of the fit is the most important element of any kitchen project and one that will truly make the difference between you being satisfied or delighted with your purchase.

Finding a kitchen fitter that suits your needs is much easier when you have a good idea of what to look for in a specialist.

Some people prefer to seek their own kitchen fitter, but this leads to major problems if the fitters are not trained or lack knowledge of the legal requirements for the job.

I'm talking about:

- Damage to your new kitchen
- Use of the wrong tools and parts
- Fitters who leave a mess in your home

For these reasons, it's vital that you use specialists that are part of the planning process when you are looking to install a new kitchen in your home.

Nicholas Hythe was formed because we felt that, despite the number of retailers in the market, customers were lacking real choice. They had little option other than to go to one of the large, national suppliers who are keen to sell you anything without taking any real interest in your needs or, at the opposite end of the scale, use a local bespoke supplier with the often high costs that that can entail. At Nicholas Hythe we aim to provide our customers with the best of both worlds. I've put this report together as a guide to show you that you can find fitters that give you the most professional service and leave you feeling happy with your new kitchen.

It consists of the benefits of using experienced kitchen installation specialists that work with kitchens like yours on a daily basis and have a close relationship with your kitchen design expert.

Look for fitters who *only* fit kitchens...

Do you really want to trust the fit of your kitchen, one of the most important investments you'll make when improving your home, to somebody who may well be able to wield a saw or a router but whose last job was fitting roofing trusses or a garden fence? Remember that errors can be costly and the finish may be visible and frustrate you every day thereafter.

Fitters who specialise in kitchens have a mentality that's different to builders or chippies. When you're fitting furniture that's expected to last several years and at which you'll look every day, you want to know that it's been fitted by someone who knows the intricacies of the job and, for example, will ensure pipes, stopcocks etc are hidden away yet still easily accessible should you need to do so.

TIP: If you're looking to employ a kitchen fitter ask them whether they specialise in fitting kitchens or just see it as another 'woodwork job'.

Look for a friendly and professional service...

When looking for a professional and friendly kitchen fitter trust is critical. Employing fitters that are regularly used by your kitchen design specialist will ensure that you receive an optimum service. The fitters will be able to have full access to your plans and will have plenty of experience working with the type of kitchen you want.

The best kitchen specialists are usually those that will supply you with friendly unbiased advice. They'll be more than happy to sit down with you before the job starts and explain how they can help to design and fit the kitchen of your dreams. This process also gives the fitter and designers the opportunity to give you advice on areas of your kitchen design that will be tricky or simply won't work very well.

You should get the feeling that your designers and fitters have your best interests at heart and you should be able to approach them at any point. This may be to ask them questions about something you feel is not right in the kitchen or something that you feel you should know more about.

An acid test is at the first meeting with the proposed fitter. From the outset they will be with customers for some time so they should act respectfully towards you and your possessions. Great fitters recognise that they're in a position of trust for the time they are in your home.

When your fitters have completed the job they should leave the kitchen clean without dust and dirt over the surfaces and floor. They will also make sure that all elements of your kitchen work to their optimum level and will give you details of anything you may need to know.

Look for a fitter with quality recommendations...

When you are looking for a kitchen fitter you must make sure that they are one you feel you can trust and will do a good job for you. You can go on to websites or look at independent reviews of certain fitters, but this is occasionally biased. You should ask for advice from your design specialist as they will have worked with and used numerous fitters. They will be more than happy to supply you with fitters that have worked with kitchen units and services that are similar or the same as your design.

Using the recommendation of your design specialist should ensure that you get a service that can't be matched. The fitter they supply will install a high standard fit simply because they are constantly

working with and are familiar with the same type of materials. Your design specialist has the most to lose in terms of their reputation should the fit not be properly managed and end up being unsatisfactory. Your kitchen design specialist will be hoping that you recommend them to friends and family and a poor job will mean that they miss out on a referral opportunity.

It is important that you use a fitter who has had quality recommendations. Don't just choose the first fitter that comes along because they are cheap. Although you feel you are getting a bargain you may find that you will have to hire a new fitter or pay out more money for new kitchen units, simply because they have not been professionally fitted to the highest standards possible.

Make sure that you choose a quality fitter even if it comes at a slightly higher price. You will be paying for the quality and a kitchen that will stay safe and working for years to come.

TIP: Look for recommendations of quality fitters and contractors from friends, family, neighbours or work colleagues – they're likely to give you a more honest opinion than any review or testimonial on a website. Alternatively, trust your kitchen supplier – they've got the most to lose in terms of their reputation should the final job fail to meet your exacting expectations.

Make sure you are getting a safe kitchen...

When people are thinking about their kitchen design they often forget that there are a number of things for them to consider around the kitchen that could potentially be dangerous. Dealing with gas, electrical, water or waste requires plenty of care, attention and knowledge, so it shouldn't be overlooked.

It is frustrating when a kitchen is installed poorly, but a kitchen that is unsafe and doesn't meet UK legislation and regulation is potentially dangerous. By using qualified and accredited contractors you can be sure that all the potentially harmful areas of your kitchen will be made safe for you and your family.

Using your specialist's choice of contractors will be of great value to you at this point. They will give you notification of the areas that will need special attention from gas engineers, electricians and other contractors. They will then help to get the contractors in place and working on the areas that require attention. Your fitter should be flexible with his time so that you can accommodate other trades people.

When you are inviting a contractor in to your home it is important that you ask for certification before they begin any work on your new kitchen. Gas engineers should be 'Gas Safe' registered and electricians should be fully or 'Part P' qualified. Electricians should also produce you with a completion certificate after the work done, but don't accept this unless the installation and work is fully completed to your satisfaction. You can then feel safe in the knowledge that all of your kitchen utilities are legal and follow regulations.

TIP: To check if your gas engineer is 'Gas Safe' registered go to http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help/check_an_engineer.aspx. For electricians please confirm that they will issue a completion certificate once all the work is completed. Don't accept one until the installation is finished and working to your satisfaction.

Make sure your fitter understands what you want...

The plans that you have for your dream kitchen may change over time and it is vital that your project manager keeps the fitter up to date with any changes and developments you require. Meeting

customers' expectations can be a demanding and stressful job for many fitters and changes are often not easily incorporated. It's vital that you should aim to work with the designer and project manager throughout to give them as much notice about the work or any developments.

Getting the fitter to understand what you want is also a good way of telling whether they are going to have your best interests at heart. A negative response to such enquiries may suggest that they are going to use your kitchen as just another wood work project. If you feel that they are not taking your ideas in or are not helping to find alternatives to your ideas, then you can be certain that they are not fully focused on giving you the kitchen you and your family deserve.

The fitter that is recommended to you will want to know what your plans are in order to arrange the work. He will need to figure out what needs to be done first and what can wait until later in the project, ensuring that your kitchen is fitted properly and to a high standard.

Making sure that your fitter knows what you want will also avoid confusion and mistakes. Mistakes can cost money and not being on the same wavelength as your designer and fitter can lead to expensive mistakes. If you want a unit in a certain position but your fitter doesn't know that, you may find yourself paying more money for a new unit.

TIP: Spend as much time as you need getting the design right at the outset. This will ensure everything works together and looks its best. Making major changes during the project will inevitably affect its outcome

Choose a fitter that has the right attitude...

When you are inviting a fitter in to your home you should consider their attitude as this an early indication of just how well your kitchen project will be completed. Kitchen fitters understand the importance of intricacies around the kitchen and will ensure that fittings like stopcocks and pipes are properly hidden yet easily accessible.

A sign of a good kitchen fitter is the way they look after their tools. Great fitters know the value of their tools and only use those that are designed for the job. Many will purchase a new router blade before every job. By changing the blades and tools to ensure that they work to a high standard means that you will get a kitchen without rough edges that you can be proud of.

The willingness that your fitter shows will allow you to see just how well they will do the work. All fitters work as part of a team to ensure that you get the kitchen that you want. The way that they talk about their team will give you an idea of how closely they are willing to work with you and your specialist.

They have to work with a designer who interprets your ideas and must be willing to accommodate the timescales of other tradesmen. By doing this they are ensuring that the job is carried out to a very high standard, on time and meeting all legal and regulatory requirements.

TIP: Ask your proposed fitter about some of the problems they've experienced working with other trades people on previous jobs and measure their reaction. A reaction that positively embraces working with specialists and understanding that their needs may come first in certain situations will speak volumes.

And finally...

I hope you have found this report useful and it will help you choose a suitable kitchen design specialist and fitter that you can trust to make your kitchen perfect.

Working closely with a professional kitchen specialist and fitter is a must if you are looking to improve your kitchen. Weigh up all your options and see which kitchen specialist has the widest variety, offers the best support and is there for your needs, rather than pushing the work through as quickly as they can.

If you are actively looking for a kitchen design specialist right now, I'd be delighted to discuss your project. Please contact me by emailing info@nicholashythe.co.uk or calling 01480 455528.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Halliday". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Bill Halliday
Managing Director, Nicholas Hythe Kitchen Design Studio

About the author

Bill Halliday is a locally-renowned kitchen design expert who, during his 25 years in the kitchen industry, has created dream kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms for 100s of satisfied customers in our region and beyond.

About Nicholas Hythe

Nicholas Hythe aims to provide an alternative to both national retailers, who rarely take the time to match your specific requirements and local bespoke providers that can cost a fortune. Our ethos, values and experience are what makes our service so sought after. Bill's expert insight has developed out of a passion for design and meeting customer's needs. It's a passion that's underpinned by a wide experience gained working with a range of manufacturers. With such comprehensive experience and an eye for up-to-the-minute kitchen design, Bill brings a unique perspective of what really works together (and, more importantly, what doesn't!). It helps us to create beautifully designed, highly practical fitted kitchens that our customers can enjoy for years to come.

Today, in his role as Design Director, Bill is responsible for managing and training our design team. He personally oversees every design created by them so that you can be assured that every kitchen we present to our customers meets the Nicholas Hythe standard for design and practicality.

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