



Lisa Albrecht shares more lessons she's learned while building her dream home. In the second part of her journey, Lisa provides advice for the framing stage.

10 Things to Remember AFTER You Sign Your Contract

BUILDING KNOW-HOW

1 Keep your eyes on the job.

Keep your blueprint (or mini print) close at hand to verify that dimensions and details correspond with what is actually going up.

"The windows in my master bedroom were supposed to be near the corners – so there would be enough room for my king-size bed and end tables in between them. When I visited the house, I noticed they weren't far enough apart to accommodate my furniture – which was the focal point of the room. So I insisted the framers move them.

The support beams in the basement were also located incorrectly. So we compromised. Some minor modifications were made to make the beams work where they were...in exchange for the windows being moved.

3 Let your real estate agent serve as a go-between.

"Asking my agent to express my concerns and negotiate changes alleviates some friction by keeping communications more professional and less personal."

2 Decide what your priorities are.

"Rather than let upgrades wreak havoc on my budget, I stuck with standard products – except for the things that would be difficult (and costly) to change later. My interior will be contemporary, so I chose black laminate countertops for most of the kitchen and then highlighted the island with a red Silestone® countertop.

"While the Silestone was expensive, it's a choice I can't live without. As a trade-off, I'm choosing standard faucets, door knobs, pulls and paint in the kitchen.

"I also put extra money in some custom windows and my wood floor (which will be factory sanded and stained black). If I don't get these items now, I probably never will. To offset these costs, I chose the standard carpet grade and vinyl flooring rather than tile in my guest bath and mudroom.

"On the exterior, I upgraded the brick to cultured stone and added some pillars to the front porch. In exchange, I selected an inexpensive front door and outdoor light fixtures that I can replace at a later date."

4 Don't forget to ask your builder to use radon-resistant construction techniques.

"There are simple measures that can be used to help prevent radon entry into your home. If they are incorporated during construction, they are considerably less expensive than mitigating a radon problem after the home is completed."

5

Get everything in writing!

"This includes corrections that must be made, upgrades, and change orders – what they will cost and when they will be completed."

6

If you have existing trees or areas of vegetation on your property, indicate which ones you want to keep on your plot plan. Otherwise, you may lose them during grading.

7

Either have someone create a landscaping plan or draw up your own.

"While I won't be able to complete my whole plan immediately, it helps me decide how to spend my landscaping allowance and ensures there will be continuity as time passes. I can also give my builder the plan so the subs will know where to place sprinkler heads."

8

Consider planting some plants or flowers before you move in.

"Because I know new landscaping takes awhile to get going, I planted some flower bulbs in the woods at the edge of my property last fall. So when I move in, this May, I'll have something colorful to look at."

9

Keep accurate room dimensions with you when you shop for furniture.

"I bought my home plan from Design Basics and also purchased a furniture layout guide, which includes a simplified floor plan with plastic furniture pieces to scale. I carry it with me...so if I run across a piece of artwork or furniture I like, I can check whether it will fit."

10

Learn to Dance!

"I'm learning to dance with the builder and subs (I take chili to the jobsite on cold Saturdays); to dance with my decorator so I make wise choices; and to dance with myself by asking 'What do I need? What do I want?' No one offers dance lessons for building a new house, but I'm learning. I just hope I don't step on too many toes!"