



Guide to Choosing an Interior Design School

HARRINGTON
COLLEGE OF DESIGN

Guide to Choosing an Interior Design School

Are you interested in pursuing a career in interior design, but are overwhelmed with the task of choosing the right school for you?

With hundreds of interior design schools to choose from, it's helpful to identify the most important criteria for narrowing your selection. Part of the process is deciding what is most valuable to you, but there are also industry-relevant factors you should take into consideration. Choosing the right interior design school is a process that requires a certain amount of introspection, but also a significant amount of research. There are a variety of components you need to consider, including location, course options, class size, accreditation, networking opportunities, financial aid and more.

To help reduce the anxiety and amount of work you need to do, we have compiled a beneficial guide to help you determine what's most important when choosing an interior design school.

We have also included steps you can take to prepare yourself for pursuing a degree in this field.

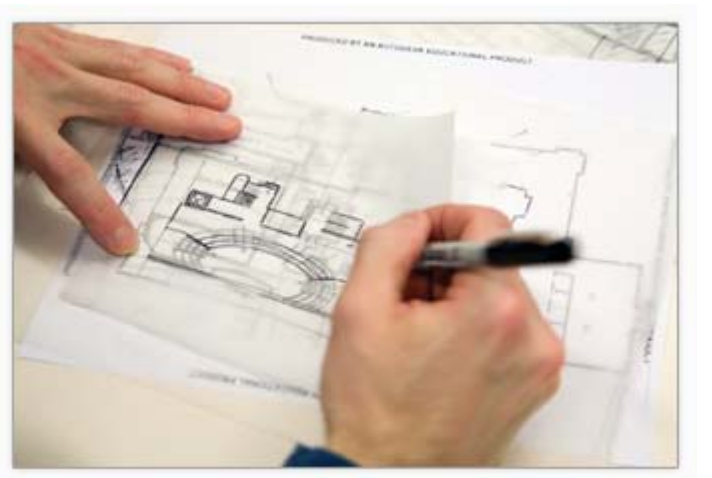


Choosing an interior design school means choosing the place you will most likely think of as home for the next few years. The school needs to provide you with the academic resources required for success, but it also needs to have ample opportunities for you to grow outside of the classroom.

What to do while you're in high school:

If you're considering pursuing a [degree in Interior Design](#), it's never too early to start acquiring the knowledge and skills you need to pursue success. High school is the perfect time to start preparing yourself for interior design school. Start taking some of these practical steps today, and you'll be well on your way.

- **Take relevant preparatory classes.** Make sure you're taking both basic and higher level math and physics courses – those skills are necessary for interior designers. Also, take any drawing, visual art, media art, technology, design and other related courses your school offers. If there are AP art classes of any kind, work them into your schedule.
- **Look for art and drawing opportunities outside of the classroom.** Local organizations such as museums and libraries often offer drawing and art courses. Check out what your city offers and get involved.





- **Network in your city.** Find out where the interior design firms are in your city and set up informational meetings with employees. Take a tour of the firm, look at work they've produced, and ask questions. These are people who have achieved success in the industry you want to enter – they are valuable resources.
- **Get involved.** Being involved in multiple extracurricular activities, clubs and organizations, whether related to interior design or not, is vitally important. They teach you important skills and help make you a well-rounded, diverse individual.

- **Learn about the industry.** Gather as much information as you can about the interior design industry. Subscribe to newsletters, check out blogs, and research, research, research. The more you know, the more prepared you'll be when the time comes to apply to schools and start pursuing your degree.

What to Look for in an Interior Design School

There are many components to consider when choosing an interior design school, but it doesn't have to be an overwhelming process. We've compiled a list of important factors you should analyze when examining prospective schools:

- **Location:** The city an interior design school is located in plays a big role in what resources, opportunities and inspiration are available for its students. A school with quality interior design training needs to be supplemented with outside cultural enrichment. It's particularly beneficial for an interior design school to be surrounded by unique and credible architecture and a variety of galleries, museums, restaurants, cafes, studios and green space.
 - Another important aspect of location is the amount and quality of design firms in the area. Students should be able to look around and see opportunities waiting for them. In addition, the presence of these firms creates opportunities for local networking.
- **Course offerings:** A credible interior design school will offer a comprehensive course of study that adequately prepares students success in the industry. Courses should be offered in various types of design, drawing, programming, materials, architecture, buildings systems, rendering, and other related subjects.
 - Also check to see if an interior design school offers the opportunity to graduate with a concentration in a specific type of design. A specialization can set you apart in this competitive industry.



- **Class size:** It is beneficial for you to attend a school that features small class sizes. This creates an environment that fosters individualized instruction and gives students ample opportunity to receive outside help when needed. In large classrooms it's easy to become just a face in the crowd.

- **Industry-current technology:** In order to become skilled in the use of industry-relevant technology, it's essential for the interior design school of your choice to make it accessible for you. This helps ensure that course material and instruction is staying current as well.



- **A faculty of practicing professionals:** A big perk for an interior design school is to hire faculty who have previously or currently do work in the industry. This enables them to pass on real-world tips and inside knowledge to their students and ensures they keep their classes industry-current.

- **Financial aid options:** Figuring out how to finance your pursuit of a degree can be daunting, so interior design schools should have a competent financial aid office in place to help you figure out what aid you qualify for. Many of these schools will also offer scholarships to help offset your costs.

- **Proper accreditation:** There are several accreditation organizations in place to evaluate interior design schools. Accreditation helps ensure that you're receiving an education that will hold up to the industry standards and will be held valuable by the industry itself. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (formerly FIDER) is a reputable organization for accreditation. It is also valuable if a school is recognized by the Higher Learning Commission.

- **A strong history and good reputation:** The interior design school you are considering should have a substantial history that demonstrates its success as an educational institution in the field of interior design. In addition, it should have built a good reputation for itself that is recognized in the interior design community. When doing research on the school you should be able to find information on its history and read a few articles written by reputable sources that speak highly of it. You may take student opinion forums into consideration, but be wary of them. Oftentimes they are composed of a few disgruntled students' comments and do not accurately portray the opinions and experiences of the majority.





Interior Design School Should Help Prepare You for Career Opportunities

All the factors listed above are necessary to provide students with a quality educational experience. However, your interior design school of choice should do more than just educate you in the classroom; it should equip you with resources that can help you pursue a career in the industry.

That being said, your school of choice needs to have the proper career services and networking tools in place to help you prepare for entrance into the interior design industry. Some essential factors for this are:

- **Competent and helpful Career Services Department:** A good Career Services Department will be available to help students develop their resumes and portfolios, find jobs they are qualified to apply for, and practice their interviewing skills. The staff should also be able to link students with the school's alumni network and other network connections it has established.
- **Networking connections at local Interior Design firms and industry events:** A credible interior design school will have established relationships with design firms in the area, and you have the opportunity to benefit from these connections. In addition, a quality interior design school should be aware of industry-relevant events in the area, and students can go to these for additional networking opportunities.
 - Location can have a great deal of influence in this. The size of the city and the location of the school within it can affect the number of design firms with available opportunities for students. The size of the city also affects the number of industry events that take place in it.
- **Professional Organizations on Campus:** Having the chance to join the professional interior design organizations that have chapters on your campus can be very beneficial. These organizations are in place to help students learn more about the interior design industry, gain connections in the professional community, get resources for the NCIDQ exam, and more. Joining a professional interior design organization is a great way to get involved and learn more about your future career path. The American Society of Interior Design (ASID) Student Chapter and the International Interior Design Associate (IIDA) are two great organizations to look for, and there are others as well.

If you're interested in pursuing career opportunities in interior design, choosing the right interior design school is a critical step in the process. There are many schools to choose from, but the criteria above should help you narrow your search considerably.

The opportunity for success in this industry is growing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that employment for interior designers is expected to grow at the national level up to 19% from 2008 to 2018, faster than average for all occupations.* Local employment markets, of course, may vary. Now is the time to begin your pursuit of career opportunities in interior design! Your future is waiting – take the first step and find out which interior design school is right for you today.

* <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos293.htm>

About Harrington College of Design



Harrington College of Design is a four-year college that offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Interior Design, an Associate of Applied Science degree in Interior Design or Digital Photography and a new Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Communication Design. Harrington has been a member of the design and higher education communities since 1931 and is conveniently located amidst an array of inspiration and resources in downtown Chicago. Small classes are taught by professional faculty with real-world experience, and the course material and resources are industry-current.



Harrington is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools and the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (formerly FIDER). Its Career Services Department offers assistance with networking and career placement assistance, and its graduates benefit from its advantageous location and resources. Financial aid is available for those who qualify.

[Contact](#) Harrington College of Design to see how their specialized degree programs can help you design a new career path today!

Harrington College of Design does not guarantee employment of salary.