

# 15 Steps to Plan Your Home Theater

Follow these easy steps and you'll be well on your way to a brand new home theater.

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Planning your home theater isn't difficult—especially if you know where to begin. We provide you with the know-how to get started.

1. **Set a budget.** Yeah, yeah—setting a budget for your home theater isn't nearly as exciting as watching Will Smith kick some robo butt, but these things have to be done. After all, you should know roughly how much money you have to spend on a home theater. If you don't, ask the person handling the checkbook.
2. **Beg to see the checkbook.** Tell her it's for drapes and curtains if you must—just get that checkbook. We need it to build you a home theater. Insert an exciting chase scene here if necessary. (Legal disclaimer: If you tell her it's for drapes and curtains, you will have to include that in the home theater plans.)
3. **The fight scene.** For goodness sake, man, don't take her on alone. If we may, we would advise hiring Uma Thurman from "Kill Bill, Volumes. 1 and 2." We prefer Uma's more subtle approach at the end of Vol. 2, but it's the more direct, win-at-all-costs Vol. 1 Uma who you'll need. Did you get that checkbook yet?
4. **Enough drama for you?** Reach a compromise, buddy. If she doesn't want the equipment out in the open, you can hide it. If she wants to decorate the room in purple peony wallpaper, allow her to—as long as you get to see the great movie and sports action on 42 inches or greater of big screen. Also, allow her to accompany you and that little checkbook on those home theater shopping excursions.
5. **Select a room.** Know where you want the home theater. Will it be in the family room, the basement, a dedicated room, or your new digs out in the garage? (Just kidding. However, rooms over the garage are good options for home theaters.)
6. **Take measurements.** You should know hers, now measure the room. Draw a layout with all the dimensions of the walls and ceiling height. Also note where you intend to locate the viewing screen or TV, the equipment rack or cabinet, the seats, and your duct-taped and gagged mother-in-law whose bound presence was instrumental in getting you a home theater.
7. **Go furniture shopping.** You don't have to buy anything yet, but we suggest giving up the game on TV for an afternoon to stroll through a furniture outlet. Take note of what furniture you'd like to include in your home theater, and consult your better half. The entire day will score you points.
8. **Convince her once again** of the aching need you both have for a home theater. Don't mention watching your favorite movies, shows or sporting events in high definition on the big-screen. Those are irrelevant to her. Mention her favorite shows and movies and channels and events that she likes to watch. Promise her TiVo if you must.
9. **Know how you'll use the room.** Will it just be for movies? Will you also be playing billiards, mixing drinks at the bar, diving off the arm of the sofa into your own custom mosh pit? Knowing these things will help determine later what kind of equipment you'll need and what will best suit your unique tastes.
10. **When do you want it done?** Sure, you want it done yesterday, but we're not time traveling, are we? Pick a date in the future, such as a few weeks or a couple of months from now. That's about when you want it done.
11. **Note any special needs.** Does the room need to be wheelchair accessible? Does anyone need to sit closer or farther from the screen? Any sensitive ears? What rooms are next door, and what are they used

for? How close are the neighbors, and could they be bothered by loud sounds? After all those home theater design conversations with your better half, will you require a chair that allows you to recline in traction? Maybe you should have hired Uma.

12. **Illuminate yourself.** Lighting in your home theater is important. Do you view TV and movies with the lights on or off? What do other people prefer? Knowing this will help determine what kind of equipment you need to buy.
13. **Think beyond your home theater.** Do you want other rooms to connect to your home theater so you can enjoy music and video around the house? Now is the time to consider this.
14. **Compare your home theater to others.** Do any friends have home theater systems? If so, check them out. Ask about the things others went through in obtaining a home theater system, including what they would do differently.
15. **Find a custom electronics company.** That is, unless you're an audio and video expert and you can hook up all this stuff and quite possibly build the room yourself. Chances are, you're not this type of person and should therefore hire professionals to do these things for you. If the room or the house is under construction, do not wait for the sheetrock or other wall surfaces to go up to hire someone. Are you getting ready to run to your local custom electronics installer? Great! Then we can have another exciting chase scene.