

**Ask Jon Eakes**

# **How to choose a computer renovation/building design software program.**

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Myles Kesten from the CD-ROM Store in Toronto sells nothing but software, and from all companies. So we figured he would have an objective opinion about design programs. So how do you choose? Pick one that matches your computer and designing skills. Some are simpler than others. Some programs require you to specify where each individual wall will go, but others just ask you to choose from a bunch of ?prefab? room shapes and the program fits them together for you. Some do a nice job but are dead ends because they are not ?upward compatible? to regular CAD (Computer Aided Drafting) programs that your builder will be using. If you want to do the basic planning and then pass the plans on to a builder or architect, you need a program that allows the builder to work directly from your plans rather than starting over. Some have project costing included, but they are almost all U.S. and out of date. Choose one that can be customized so that you can put in current and local costs, or ignore that part of the program. Keep in mind that most programs today have some kind of commercial interest behind them, and are designed to either sell full house plans or products. They may work for you, but they may be biased toward their sponsors.

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