

Some rules for choosing stools



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THE DESIGN FEED

In today's world, a sit-down meal is often eaten right at the kitchen counter, which means choosing the right every-day stool can be more important than choosing your once-a-week dining chair.

Whether you have a slick high rise unit or a cozy traditional house (or anywhere in between), my design guide for bar stools will give you the tips you need to choose the right size, shape, and style — starting with the actual meaning of the term 'bar stool.'

Height

Although "bar stool" is a common phrase, a true bar stool is really meant for a tall bar surface (40"-42") with about a 30" high seat.

In fact, a counter stool suits a standard countertop height (35"-36") with a typi-

cal 26" high seat. Choosing the wrong option will result in a poor fit, so check your measurements!

If your counter is an unusual height, look for an adjustable-height stool, as a fixed stool at a different height will be rare.

This will also allow users to sit at a more comfortable level if their own height varies (especially children or very tall users).

Size and spacing

The spacing of your stools is also very important — pack in too many and you'll have guests bumping elbows. Measure your counter rather than guessing the number of stools by eye as looks can be deceiving. Typically, you should leave at least 21" per seat and you'll need a few inches more if your stools have arms.



A kitchen counter stool should suit a standard countertop height and allow space for guests to be comfortable.

Swivelling stools need ample room as well — you can't swivel out of your seat if your neighbour is only an inch away. For such a stool (especially one fixed to the

ground) space them 26"-28" apart centre to centre.

Backs and arms

A back and/or arms will definitely make a seat more comfortable — an important consideration if you expect to use the stools regularly for long leisurely chats.

However, it will also make the stools harder to fully tuck in (and typically more costly), so it may not be the best option if you prefer to keep the stools hidden out of the way most of the time.

A small back and no arms is a good compromise for being space efficient and still comfortable, but if you prefer the open look a backless stool will do just fine for quick casual bites.

Material and style

- **Wood.** Simple wood barstools are the perfect no-fail option, as they can suit modern or traditional spaces equally well and always add a sense of warmth.

The only tricky area can be if your kitchen already contains a lot of wood, in which case you should consider using a differing tone (such as dark stools against light cabinets) or a metal base with a wood top to add some contrast.

- **Metal.** Antiqued, indus-

trial-style metal stools are a popular way to add some eclectic character and broaden the material palette (adding a pleasing contrast to stone counters and wood floors).

If you have stainless steel appliances, try echoing them with modern polished aluminum seats. For a welcoming glam look, try trendy gold-tinted seat bases.

- **Plastic.** Clear acrylic seats are popular for modern spaces, and work well for transitional kitchens too.

The barely-there appearance helps keep the visual emphasis on a spectacular countertop or cabinetry, and gives an extra-airy look in a tighter space.

For a fun twist, try a tinted clear plastic that adds a hint of colour without going over the top.

- **Upholstery.** Upholstered seats are ultimately the most comfortable, with an elegance fit for traditional spaces.

Slip covered seats will be the safest long term option against kitchen spills but for a sleek modern look consider leather or vinyl upholstery that can be wiped clean.

When in doubt, try an elegant gray — it'll stand up to some wear and won't show colour

transfer from dark denim, so you can truly relax!

— For more kitchen inspiration, visit our brand new website and portfolio at www.tidg.ca, or find me on Twitter and Instagram at @yanicsimard.

QUICK BITES

1. Homeowners often stumble on their seat heights, so check your measurements!
2. Don't overcrowd your seats — use one stool per 21" max so every guest can be comfortable.
3. If you have a small space, go compact + backless and let users lean in for a casual meal.
4. In a traditional space, try simple wood stools, antiqued metal, or a slipcovered upholstery.
5. For a modern look try polished or gold-tinted aluminum, clear acrylic, or masculine leather.

Although 'bar stool' is a commonly used phrase, a true bar stool is really meant for a tall bar surface.

