



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

9 Things That Make Interiors Look Amateur

Nine faults that give away a self-made interior render, in the order they cost you most — and the scene checklist that catches all nine before you hit render.

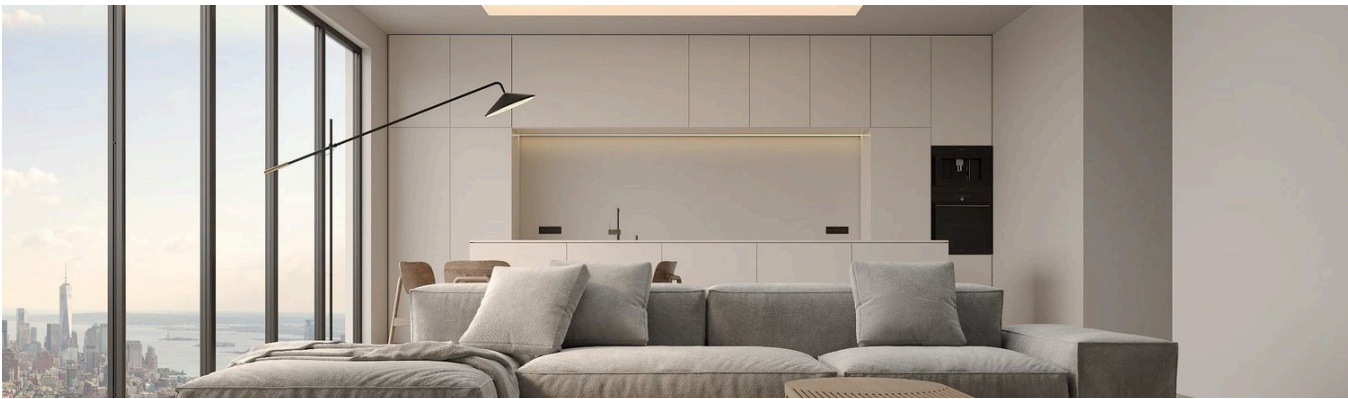


START HERE

It is almost never the renderer

People compare rendering software for weeks, buy the winner, and produce interiors that still look wrong in a way they cannot name. The renderer was never the variable. Nine things are, and they rank in a stable order.

	THE FAULT	HOW MUCH IT COSTS YOU
01	Lighting that has no source	Ruins the image on its own. Fixing it fixes more than the other eight combined.
02	Camera height and lens	Subtle, constant, and the reason a technically clean render still feels like a video game.
03	Material scale	Instantly readable as wrong by anyone in the trade, invisible to the person who set it.
04	The showroom problem	Nobody lives there. Reads as a catalogue, not a home, and kills sales imagery.
05	Ceilings left empty	Half the frame doing nothing, in the half clients look at last and notice most.
06	Everything in focus, everything lit	No hierarchy. The eye has nowhere to go.
07	Post-production skipped	Raw output is not a deliverable in any other visual trade either.
08	Resolution decided at the end	Discovered on the day of the deadline, fixable only by re-rendering.
09	A set that does not match itself	Six good images that clearly come from six different afternoons.



Maverick Frame production render.

FAULTS 01 – 05

The five that cost the most

01 Lighting with no source

Every bright area in a real room comes from somewhere you could point at. Decide the time of day and the window orientation **before** placing a single light, then let the window do most of the work. Interior fixtures are a top-up, not the lighting. If you cannot name where a highlight comes from, delete it.

02 Camera height and lens

Standing eye level is about 1.55–1.65 m; seated is about 1.15–1.25 m. Most amateur interiors are shot from roughly a metre, which reads as a child's view without anyone knowing why. Use 24–35 mm, keep verticals parallel, and stop using 16 mm to "fit the room in" — it is the single most recognisable amateur tell.

03 Material scale

Check every texture against something of known size in the scene. A floor plank is roughly 120–190 mm wide; a standard brick is 215 mm long; a tile is whatever the specification says and not whatever the map defaults to. Wrong scale is the fault most often spotted by the client's contractor rather than the client.

04 The showroom problem

Perfectly aligned cushions, nothing on any surface, no cable anywhere, one book at forty-five degrees. Add three things a person would actually leave out, and let one of them be slightly out of place. This costs ten minutes and changes how the image reads more than any render setting.

05 Empty ceilings

In a 24–35 mm interior the ceiling is a large part of the frame. Real ones have a cornice, a shadow gap, a service line, a change of plane or a considered fixture. A flat white plane across the top third is a giveaway, and it is cheap to fix.

FAULTS 06 – 09

The four that show up at the end

06 No hierarchy

If everything is equally lit and equally sharp, the image has no subject. Decide what the shot is *about* — the window seat, the island, the stair — and let brightness and contrast fall away from it. Depth of field helps, but gently: heavy blur in an architectural interior looks like a phone photo, not a photograph.

07 Post-production skipped

Levels, a small colour grade, cleaning up light leaks and fixing one or two artefacts is normal practice, not cheating. Raw render output is a negative, not a print. Budget twenty minutes per image and keep the layered file — the client's next comment will need it.

08 Resolution decided last

Ask what the largest use will be **before** you set up the camera: a site board and a brochure spread need very different pixel counts, and no amount of upscaling recovers them afterwards. Aspect ratio matters too — reframing a 3:2 image into a portrait brochure slot loses the composition you spent the day on.

09 A set that does not match itself

Six images of one apartment should share one time of day, one white balance and one grade. Render them from one saved scene state, grade them in one pass, and view them side by side at final size before sending. Clients judge a set as a set.

On the stack, briefly

Our own split: the model is built and rendered in 3ds Max, because it gives the better result, and real-time carries the animation and the economics. The modelling layer and the animation layer are different tools doing different jobs — a single tool that claims both usually wins on speed and loses on the frame you print.

Where the time actually goes

Faults 01 to 05 are decisions, and cost minutes. Faults 06 to 09 are process, and cost re-renders. If you are learning this alongside your actual job, the second group is what makes people conclude that rendering is slow. It is not slow. It is unforgiving about order.

BEFORE YOU HIT RENDER

The scene checklist

Two minutes, and it catches all nine. Print it, or keep it open on a second screen.

Set up

- ☐ Time of day and window orientation decided, written down
- ☐ Every light traceable to a visible source
- ☐ Camera at 1.15–1.65 m, 24–35 mm, verticals parallel
- ☐ Ceiling height matches the drawing, not the default
- ☐ Every texture checked against a door, brick or plank
- ☐ Ceiling has at least one considered element
- ☐ Three lived-in objects added, one slightly out of place
- ☐ The subject of the shot named out loud

Before you commit

- ☐ Largest end use confirmed — board, brochure, web, print
- ☐ Aspect ratio matches the slot it goes into
- ☐ Resolution set from the end use, not the default
- ☐ Scene state saved so the shot can be reproduced
- ☐ Test render at 25% reviewed before the full run

After

- ☐ Levels and one consistent grade across the whole set
- ☐ Layered file kept for the next round of comments
- ☐ All images viewed side by side at final size

The honest line on when to stop

Doing your own interiors makes sense for concept work, for options you are still deciding between, and for anything internal. It stops making sense at the point where the image is what someone buys from, submits, or prints large — not because the software cannot do it, but because the last ten percent of an interior is where nearly all the time lives, and it is the part that does not compress.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360



MAVERICK
FRAME
STUDIO

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

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Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.

