

OPEN-PLAN LIVING / DINING / KITCHEN DESIGN CHECKLIST

A practical guide for tropical, Caribbean-style home layouts

1. Ventilation & Airflow

- ☐ Identify main wind direction on your lot (usually NE trades).
- ☐ Ensure windows/doors create a **cross-ventilation path** across the open space.
- ☐ Keep airflow channels free from tall or bulky furniture.
- ☐ Add clerestory windows, vent blocks, or transom windows for passive cooling.
- ☐ Consider ceiling fans for each zone (living + dining + kitchen).

2. Natural Lighting

- ☐ Maximize daylight by placing larger openings on east/north.
- ☐ Avoid blocking light from windows with cupboards or tall shelving.
- ☐ Use light-reflective surfaces (tiles, terrazzo, light woods).
- ☐ Plan layered lighting for evenings: ambient + task + accent.

☼ 3. Zoning (Creating Spaces Without Walls)

- ☐ Use furniture placement to define zones (sofa backs, dining table alignment, island)
- ☐ Add rugs to “ground” the living area.
- ☐ Use pendant lights to define the dining area
- ☐ Keep clear circulation paths (3-4 ft minimum)/
- ☐ Consider a dropped or raised ceiling for zone identity.

🍳 4. Kitchen Layout

- ☐ Establish the **work triangle** (sink → stove → refrigerator).
- ☐ Add a kitchen island for separation + prep space.
- ☐ Ensure 4–6 ft between island and counters for movement.
- ☐ Place the sink so you can see part of the room—better interaction.
- ☐ Install a strong range hood to reduce cooking odours in the open space.

🪑 5. Furniture Sizing & Placement

- ☐ Choose furniture scaled to your room width (no oversized sectionals in narrow spaces).
- ☐ Maintain a 7–10 ft viewing distance between sofa and TV (depending on TV size).
- ☐ Place dining area near kitchen for easy serving.
- ☐ Keep walkways open, especially from main entry to back patio.
- ☐ Avoid furniture blocking the breeze path.

6. Material Selection (Tropical-Friendly)

- ☐ Cool flooring: tile, stone, terrazzo, polished concrete.
- ☐ Use moisture-resistant kitchen materials (marine ply, PVC, quartz).
- ☐ Add natural textures: rattan, bamboo, tropical woods.
- ☐ Consider low-VOC paints for better indoor air quality.

7. Temperature Control

- ☐ Use high or vaulted ceilings to allow warm air to rise.
- ☐ Add roof vents, ridge vents, or solar attic exhaust.
- ☐ Keep appliances in well-ventilated corners.
- ☐ Plan shade elements outside windows (awnings, verandahs, pergolas).

8. Colour & Style Flow

- ☐ Keep a unified palette across all three zones.
- ☐ Mix Caribbean colours like aqua, ochre, marine blue, coral.
- ☐ Maintain cohesion between kitchen cabinetry and adjacent living furniture.
- ☐ Add Caribbean accents: jute rugs, tropical artwork, timber ceilings.



9. Feng Shui & Energy Flow (Optional, but you use it often)

- ☐ Ensure entry doors don't open directly onto the stove.
- ☐ Place the sofa in a "command position" with back against a solid wall.
- ☐ Keep circulation fluid .— no cramped corners or blocked pathways.
- ☐ Use plants to soften sharp architectural lines and improve chi flow.
- ☐ Dining table should not be directly under a beam.



10. Acoustics & Comfort

- ☐ Add soft items (rugs, curtains, cushions) to minimise echo.
- ☐ Avoid too many hard reflective surfaces.
- ☐ Consider acoustic panels if the room is very large.



11. Cleanliness & Ease of Maintenance

- ☐ Choose wipeable surfaces for kitchen and living areas.
- ☐ Ensure easy access to garbage/recycling.
- ☐ Keep entryways clutter-free.
- ☐ Include closed storage to hide appliances and reduce visual noise.

12. Safety & Clearances

- ☐ Minimum 36" walkways everywhere.
- ☐ Keep stovetops away from major circulation paths.
- ☐ Secure area rugs (non-slip backing).
- ☐ Add child-safe corners if needed.

13. Measurements (Quick Reference)

- Living area: **10-14 ft width** minimum
- Dining area: **8-10 ft width**
- Kitchen → Dining distance: **4-8 ft**
- Kitchen circulation: **4-6 ft** between counters/island
- Main walkway: **3-4 ft**