

# Your virtual home

Ever wondered how interior designers come up with their ideas? Fancy having a go at designing and decorating your own room? Using Floorplan 3D, Darren Lock shows you how

**T**he really great thing about home computers is that they liberate the layperson to do things that they wouldn't normally be able to do without training or expensive equipment.

For example, if you needed someone to design a house, or wanted to try out some home refurbishments, you would need to call in an architect or interior designers. These experts would then assess your requirements and use their training to come up with a design. Well, those days are now thankfully long gone, and well and truly a thing of the past. Yes, you could pay for a professional, or alternatively you could have some fun trying out ideas yourself. This is where your home computer and a copy of

Floorplan 3D (featured on our coverdisc this month) comes in. This piece of software is a complete home design solution for your home computer, and it will be an invaluable aid if you are redecorating or embarking on a redesign project.

Similar to a 3-D modelling application, Floor Plan 3D allows you to create a virtual 3-D model of your home (or your dream home) and decorate it in any way you see fit. The software will then allow you to walk through your virtual creation. Is there a better way to try out your decorating skills without spilling a drop of gloss paint? Over the next four pages, we'll take an in-depth look at the program. For more information on the program and the upgrade offer visit [www.floorplan.tv](http://www.floorplan.tv)



## On the CD...

FloorPlan 3D 6 (Full product)

## Learn how...

### You can...

- Make 3-D plans
- Create virtual environments

### You could...

- Design your kitchen

## XP features...

- 3-D image handling

## Quick Tips!

Even though the version of FloorPlan 3D on our coverdisc is absolutely free, it is still packed with features and functions. Here are some tips to make life easier...

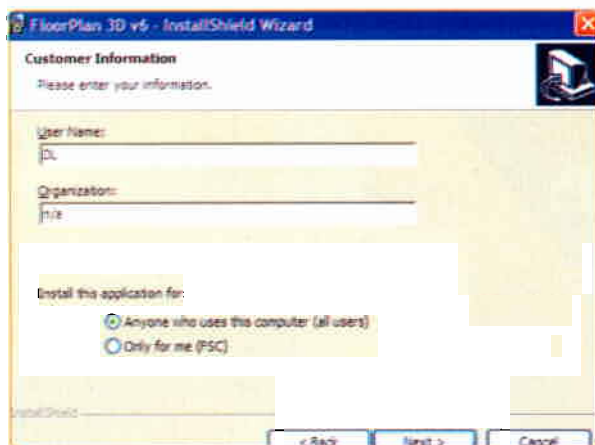
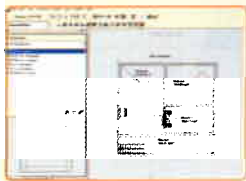
### Adding text

You can add text notes to your design by clicking the 'Text' button at the top of the toolbar. Then type in your text, select the font style and size and press the 'Insert' button. You can then press 'OK' and place your text on the blueprint.



### The Tape Measure

When designing a new home, you are going to need to be accurate with the measurements. Well, you can use the tape measure function to carefully measure out all the dimensions.



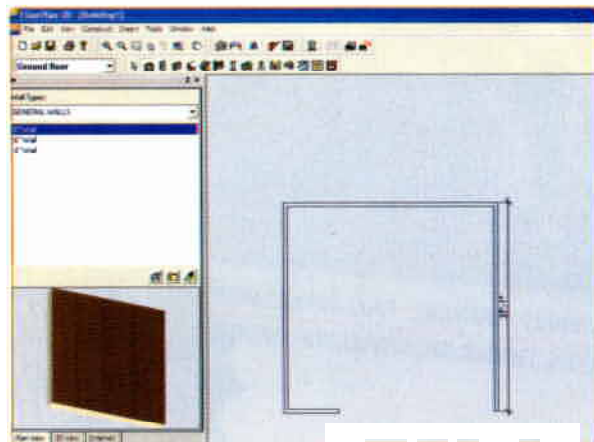
## 1 Begin at the beginning

The first step on this creative journey is to actually install the software. Locate the Floorplan 3D executable on the cover disc and activate it. Now follow the prompts of the installation wizard, entering your details and installation location.



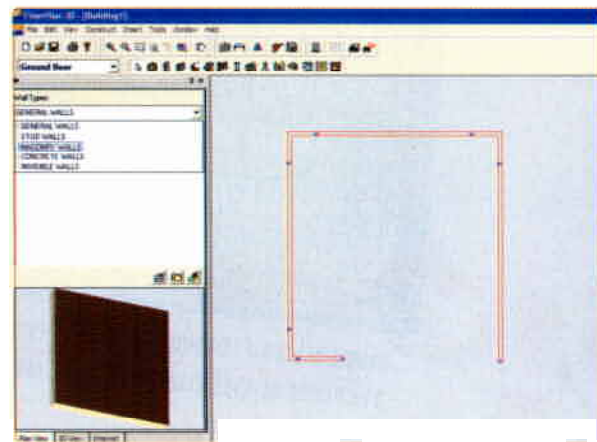
## 2 Starting up

To run Floorplan 3D, click on 'Start', 'All Programs', 'IMSI Floorplan 3D V6', 'Floorplan 3D V6'. The application will run and you will be presented with an introduction screen asking you to register your copy.



## 3 Another brick in the wall

Click on the 'New' button to start a new document. You are now on the ground floor of your virtual house. Click on the 'Wall' button on the toolbar at the top of the editing screen and you can use your cursor to draw walls.



## 4 Different types of wall

The default wall setting is General 8' Wall, but you can change this. If you click the 'Wall Type' drop-down menu, you can select from a variety of different wall styles and sizes, including concrete, masonry and stud.

# Make your own furniture

Floorplan 3D includes 13 categories, with over 70 different items for you to populate your homes. But what if you want to customise your design? Well, with a little bit of patience, you can make your very own virtual furniture...

### Furniture

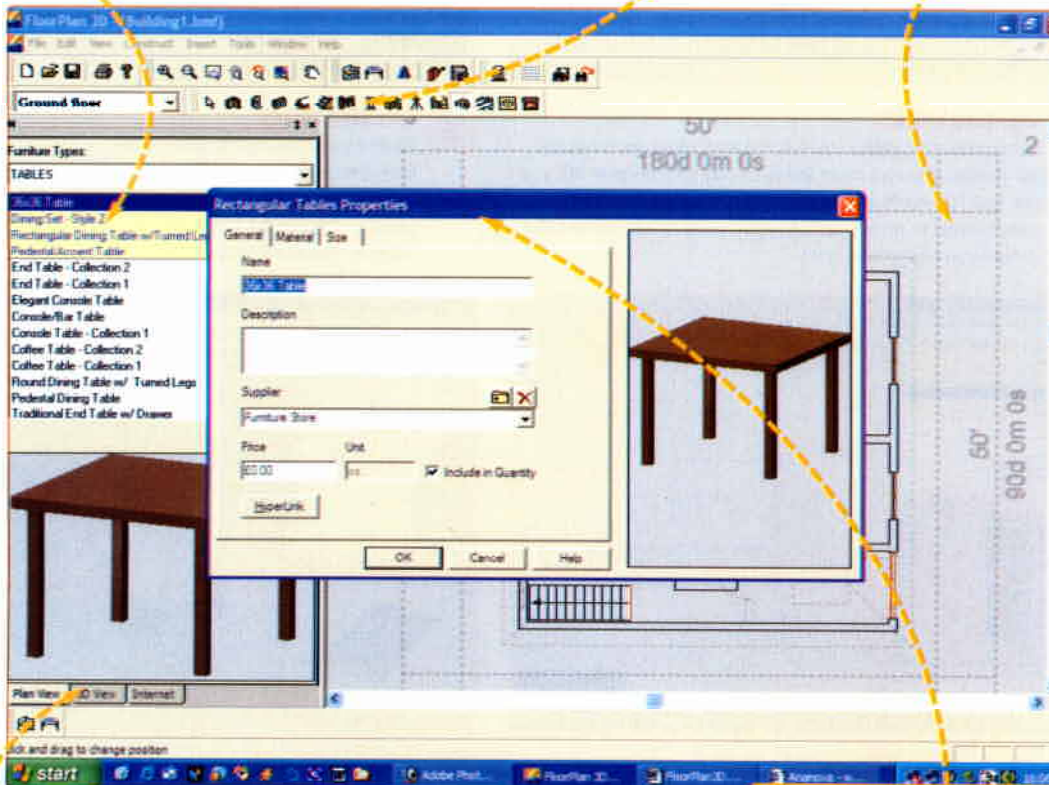
The 'Furniture' panel allows you to select the many types of furniture objects that you can place in your floorplan

### Main toolbar

The toolbar contains everything you need to create a floorplan, including walls, roofs and appliances

### Editing

This is the main editing area, where your entire floorplan is displayed and all the editing work is carried out



### View

The viewing tabs at the bottom of the menu allow you to switch from Plan View to 3D View to Internet View

### Properties

The object 'Properties' menu allows you to make radical changes to existing items to create your own custom furniture

## Quick Tips!

Over these four pages, we're cramming in some excellent tips that will really help you make the most of the program. Let's take a look...

### Another Dimension

If you don't like the way the blueprints are drawn, you can easily change your measurement settings in Floorplan 3D. Just click on the 'Dimension Settings' button, located at the bottom of the main control panel. Here you can alter the style and presentation of the blueprint.



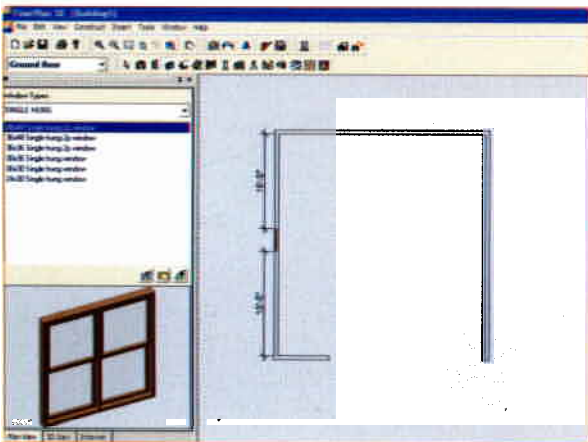
### Display Tweaks

Another way of changing how the blueprint is presented is to open the 'Display Filter' menu. This allows you to toggle on and off certain features that are on your floorplan. You could hide all the furniture in your home, for example. You can also switch on a handle transparent grid that will help your planning.



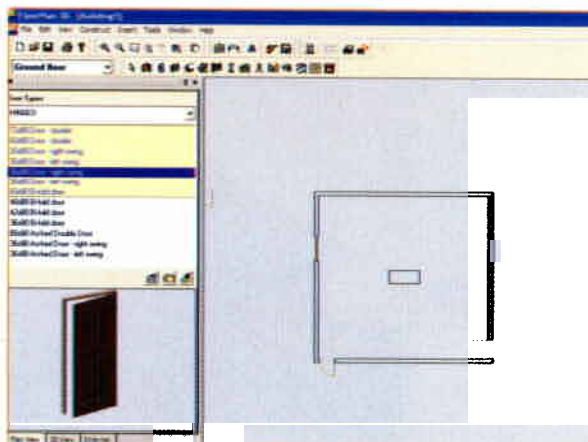
### Building Materials

A really clever function of Floorplan 3D is the 'Material List' menu, which compiles an easy shopping list that you'll require to build your dream home. If you enter all the prices for materials, it will even total up the final cost.



## 5 Looking through windows

Of course, once you've added some walls to your construction, you might want to add some windows too. Click on the 'Windows' button from the toolbar and select which style of window you want from the style list. Then you can simply place the item onto your blueprint.



## 6 Head on the door

Once the four walls have been virtually built, you can also add some doors to your first room. How else will the virtual people get in and out? Again, there are a variety of door styles and sizes to choose from. Some of them are quite lavish.

## Explanation

### Radiosity

A mathematical technique used by 3-D rendering software to simulate the way that light is distributed around a 3D model in a virtual arena.

### Raytrace

This is a process that reads all the objects used in a floorplan to produce a high definition image with shadows and reflections.

## Quick tips!

Floorplan 3D is packed with many excellent features. Here are some more tips and hints to get the best from this superb software...

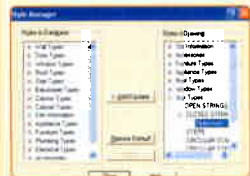
### Floored genius

To add and delete new floors in your virtual home, click on the 'Floor Location Settings' button. This will bring up a menu that will display the dimensions of the various floors in your construction and allow you to add or delete levels from your home.



### Keeping track of styles

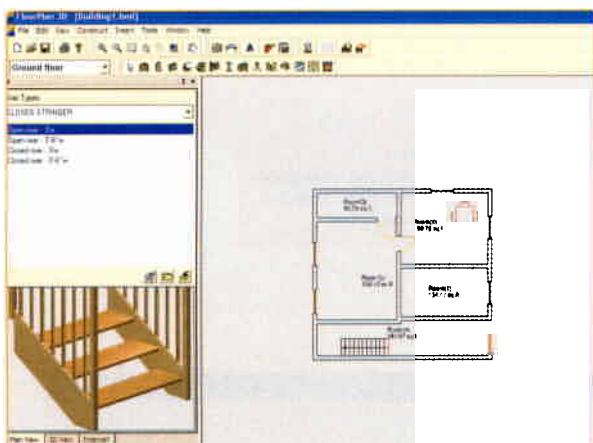
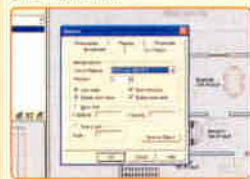
By clicking 'Tools', 'Style Manager', you get the chance to see what styles have been used in your floorplan. The Style Manager lists every building item by category, and also shows you exactly what items have been used in the current design.



### Changing options

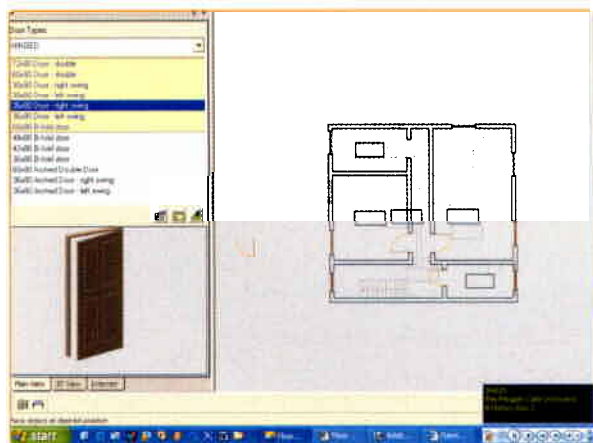
You can call up the main option screen by clicking 'Tools', 'Options'.

Here, you can set the current dimensional settings (switching from metric to imperial, for example), set the dimensions of the on-screen grid or activate the 'Snap to grid' function.



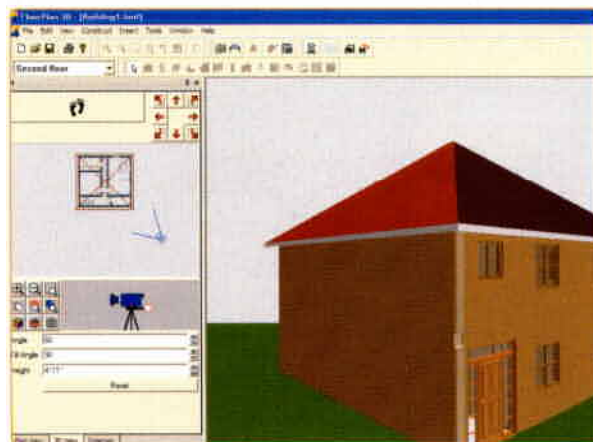
## 7 Up the stairs

Remember that unless you live in a bungalow, most houses are divided into two more levels. Luckily for Floorplan 3D, you can build upwards and add extra layers. However, for your construction to be satisfactory, you'll need to add some stairs to lead you to the next level.



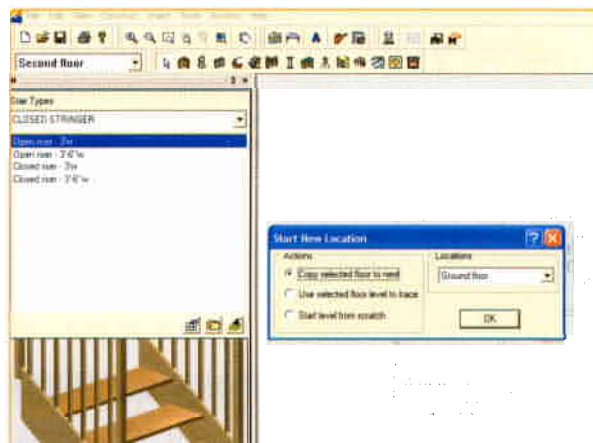
## 9 The second floor

We used the 'Copy' function to copy the ground floor onto the second floor. It is a lot easier to do this and then use the cursor to remove all those elements that you no longer need. You will also notice that a very faint blueprint remains of the ground floor.



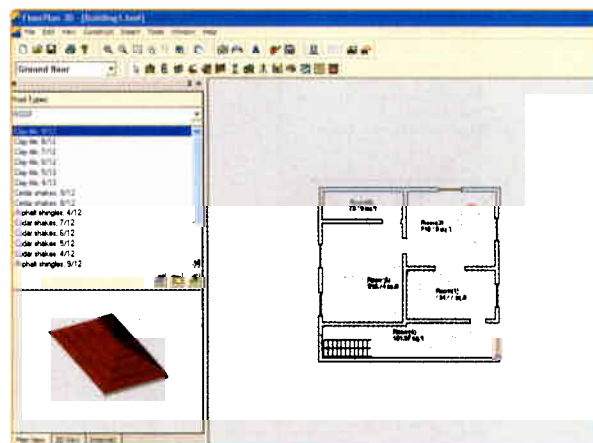
## 11 Adding your roof

Once you've made sure that your walls are OK, select the highest level of your house and click on the 'Roof' button from the toolbar. Now, choose which roof style you want for your virtual home and click the 'Insert' button to create the roof.



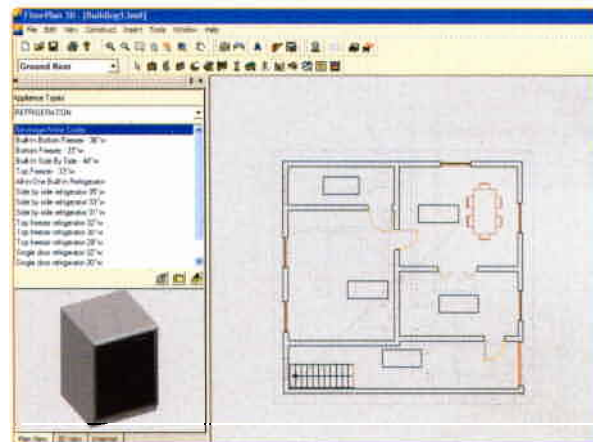
## 8 On the level

To add a second floor to your house, select 'Second Floor' from the drop-down menu. You will then be asked if you want to copy the ground floor directly onto the second, whether you want to use the ground floor for tracing purposes or whether you want to start from scratch.



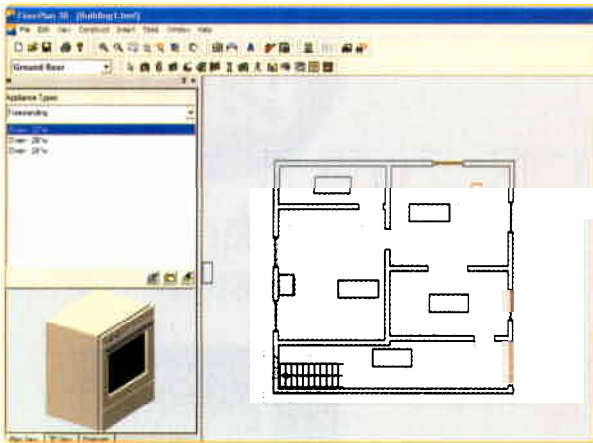
## 10 Preparing your roof

A house isn't home without a roof. To add a roof to your virtual house, you'll need to make sure that each pair of walls are of equal lengths, otherwise the roof won't fit on the house properly. Which would be rather unfortunate.



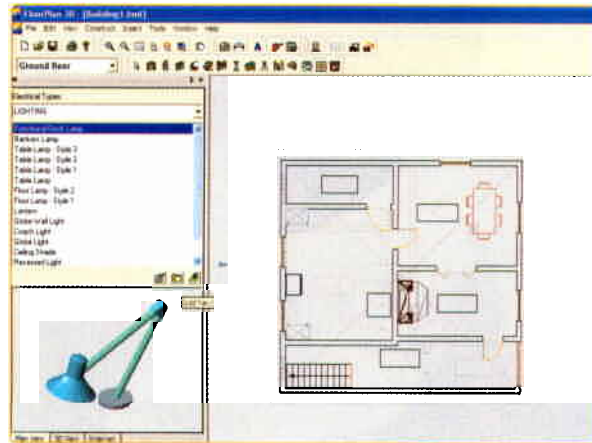
## 12 Interior design

So by now, you've added your walls, your windows, your doors and your roof. But if you want your house to really be a home, you'll need to add some furniture and appliances. Again, at the top of the editing screen there are buttons to add these extras to your design.



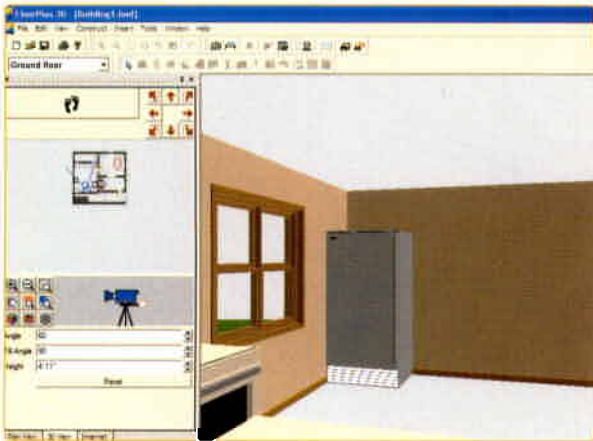
### 13 In the kitchen

You can add a number of kitchen appliances to your virtual house. By clicking on the 'Appliance' button on the toolbar, you can place refrigerators, ovens and washing machines into your rooms. There is a rich variety of items to choose from.



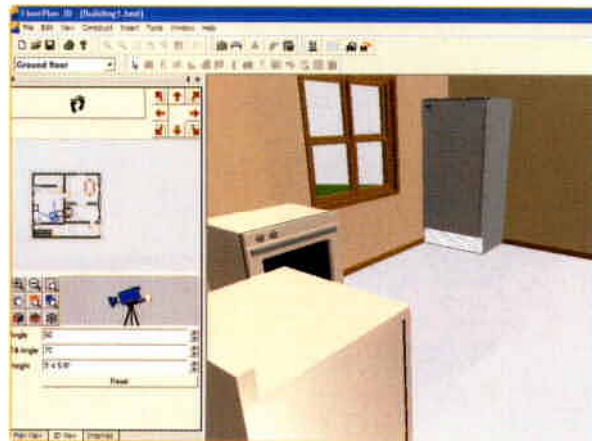
### 14 Populate your home

After the kitchen, you can move from room to room, populating it with furniture from the list. There are several familiar items that you would find in the home, including electrical equipment such as lighting and fans, bathroom equipment and general furniture.



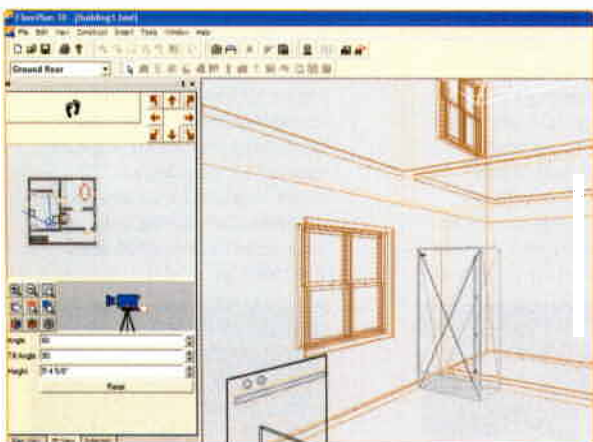
### 15 Entering the third dimension

Once you've designed your rooms, you can walk around and explore every nook and cranny in virtual space. Just click on the '3D View' tab at the bottom of the screen and the main editing screen will change to a rendered three-dimensional version of your house.



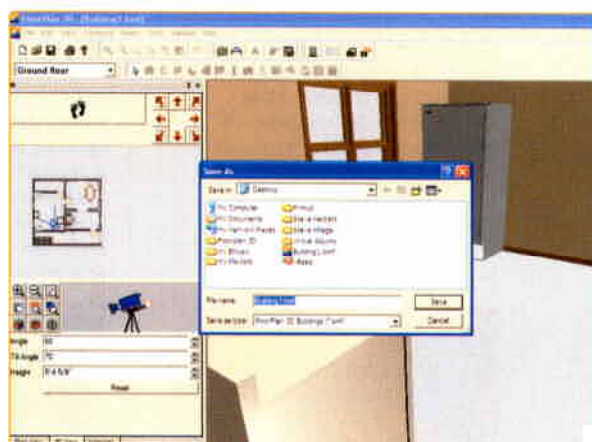
### 16 Moving around

To explore your 3-D home, click on the blue camera icon and drag and drop it to the location you want to see. If you click and hold the blue camera position icon, you can swivel it 360 degrees. Alternatively, you can use the eight-way directional panel to walk around.



### 17 Camera shy

Using the control tabs below the camera icon, you can alter the camera's angle, tilt angle and overall height. The 'Reset' button restores everything back to its default setting. You can also turn textures on and off, and revert to wireframe models by clicking the control buttons to the left of the camera.



### 18 Saving your work

When you are happy with your design, click on 'File', 'Save' to save your work on your hard drive. You can also save your design as a 'VRML' file (which is a standard 3-D modelling format). If you want to save a screen grab of your house, select the 'Save View' button on the main toolbar.

## Quick tips!

### Adjusting Rendering

On the 'Options' screen, you can also adjust how Floorplan 3D renders its world.

You can turn up the quality if you have a fast PC, or slow it down if your computer cannot handle 3-D modelling. You can also select how the 3-D modelling is processed and the size of the image output file. So many options!



### Position of the Sun

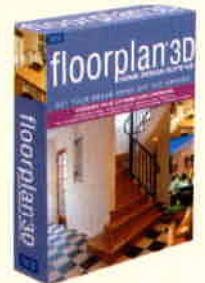
Yes, you can even set the position of the sun in Floorplan 3D. On the 'Options' screen, click on the 'Sun Position' tab and select the country in which you are currently residing. Adjust the date and time, and then Floorplan 3D will adjust the virtual sun position accordingly. Smart!

## Upgrade

### Special upgrade offer to readers

Even though the version of FloorPlan 3D on our coverdisc is absolutely free, version 8 offers a great deal more functionality and some extra added features. These include:

- Add dormers, skylights, balconies, decking
- Create landscape, path and driveways, fences and gates
- More roof styles and a new updated texture library
- 500 pre-drawn 3D Symbols
- Updated LightWorks rendering engine
- Ability to create curved walls



Readers wishing to upgrade from covermounted 6 to latest version 8 can save £10 off the RRP and upgrade for the special offer price of £29.99. To claim your WXPME discount, call 01480 357409 quoting reference code - FP6WXPME.