Display Cabinet Design: Open Shelves or Glass Doors?

Open shelves provide direct access and an informal display, while glass-fronted cabinets create a more defined enclosure. The best choice depends on what you want to show, how often you use it and how much visual activity the room can accommodate. Start with the collection rather than the cabinet shape.

Choose what deserves display

Select the objects you genuinely enjoy seeing and group them by scale. Include the tallest and widest pieces when preparing the brief. Leave space around important objects rather than planning a shelf for every possession. Storage for the remaining items can be closed, helping the visible collection feel more considered.

Compare access and appearance

Open shelving makes rearranging straightforward. Glass doors add another visible surface, with frames and reflections that become part of the composition. Think about the room's lighting and the views from the main seats. Try to see a representative sample rather than judging the effect entirely from a rendering.

Specify shelves for the contents

Tell the designer about heavier books, ceramics or other substantial pieces. Have shelf spans, supports and the door arrangement checked for the intended loads. Do not assume that a fine-looking shelf in a reference photograph will suit a different collection or width. The structure should be resolved alongside the visual design.

Plan lighting selectively

If lighting is included, decide which areas need emphasis and how wiring and components can be accessed. Review glare and reflections, especially with glass fronts. A display cabinet does not need every shelf to be equally illuminated. Thoughtful spacing, a clear background and a limited collection can provide enough interest on their own.

Discuss your display collection and room photographs with Fabbro to explore cabinet options.