

20 Tips for Planning a Successful House Remodel

[Melina Gillies](#)

When planning a house remodel, it can be tempting to skip to the exciting stage of choosing new paint colors, fixtures and fittings, but in order for any renovation to go smoothly, there are several things to think about before you even begin.

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Know Your End Goal

Before you decide [how extensively to renovate](#), you need to know what your end goal is for your home. Are you renovating to raise the resale value of your home, or will you be staying put for years to come? Consider the condition of your neighborhood before you begin, and know which renovations are a good return on investment, and which will be considered overdoing it for the area. Having a specific plan in place for your future will help you decide how deep to go with your project. Plus: [11 Important Things to Do When Planning to Sell Your Home](#)

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Have a Budget

Knowing your budget—and sticking to it—is one of the most important parts of renovation planning. Remember to add in a contingency fund for any unexpected costs—and expect to use it—as well as incidental costs like the cost of eating out for a kitchen reno, or even taking a hotel for a night or two. [It can be easy to want a top-of-the-line renovation](#), but perhaps all you need are some [cheap upgrades which will make your house look more expensive](#). Do your research and plan your budget before ever lifting a hammer.

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Consult the Calendar

If you're hoping for a brand new home for a particular event or holiday, make sure you look at your end date and work your way backward. Be sure to pencil in a few weeks to a month at the end for wiggle-room in case there are delays on the way to avoid disappointment. Plus: [How to Complete a Renovation Without Getting a Divorce](#)

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Do Your Research

Take the time to chat with friends, family, and neighbors about the renovation work they have done, and the challenges they have faced during the process. Having a wealth of information from homeowners who have been in your shoes can be invaluable in the planning process, and this information may alter your end plan. Check out our [17 Smarter Renovation and Home Improvement Tips](#) to get started.

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Know Your Limits

DIY renos are a great way to save money, have a sense of accomplishment, and involve the entire family, but they can turn disastrous if you don't know what you're doing. Know which tasks you can safely tackle, and which should be handled like the pros, [like a potentially load-bearing wall](#), asbestos or lead paint. If you're feeling unsure, here's [how to find a good contractor](#) to help.

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Ask for References

Any good contractor will have no problem providing references, and copies of liability insurance before a job begins. Don't rely solely on client testimonials, search out actual customers that can give you a firsthand account and answer any questions you may have. For any project, ask to see before and after images of a contractor's prior work, and most importantly—trust your gut and [know which questions to ask](#).

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Pack Up

To make any house remodel as simple as possible, declutter, pack up or move any items in the renovation zone. For a whole-home remodel, consider renting an offsite locker or onsite storage pod to keep all your belongings secure and clean during the process. Plus: [Tips for Moving Furniture](#)

By [DiversyFund](#) — Many people are selling their wallets short by leaving these 6 crucial assets out of their portfolios.

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Consider Your Routine

If you're an experienced DIYer, you are likely good at working around the disruptions of a house remodel. However, if you've hired a contractor for any part of the job, be sure to be clear about your daily routine, and work with the contractor to come up with start and end times that cause the least disruption in your family's day. After all, no one wants to encounter tradespeople while you're still in your bathrobe. Plus: [10 Marriages Almost Destroyed by DIY Projects](#)

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Establish Mission Control

There's nothing more frustrating than being in the middle of a job when you [can't find the tool you need](#). Before you begin your remodel, reserve an area of your home to act as mission control to keep all your tools, materials, manuals and checklists in one place. Plus: [Tips for Getting Your Garage Clean and Organized](#)

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EVGENIIA TRUSHKOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Protect the Kids

A house remodel is a perfect way to [get the kids involved in DIY](#), but for very little ones it can be dangerous too. Be sure to install child safety gates, electrical safety covers and store sharp tools well out of the way of curious tots, especially on off-hours where there may not be adequate supervision in the remodel zone.



ALEXEI_TM/SHUTTERSTOCK

Don't Forget the Pets

The temporary chaos of a home under renovation can be stressful at the best of times for the human occupants of the house, let alone the four-legged family members. When doing a house remodel, consider the [safety and care of your pets](#), which could mean having a family member or friend pet-sit while the bulk of the work is getting done. This is especially true when the doors will often be open to bring tools and materials in and out.

STANISLAW MIKULSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Plan For Outages

If your home is lacking [plumbing shut-off valves](#) in the area you are working on, you may have to shut the water off at the main valve, leaving your home without access to running water. Plan ahead and place containers of water in the fridge for drinking, on the counter for cooking and have buckets of water available to flush the toilet. An easy way to do this is to fill the bathtub with water and place a bucket nearby to pour into the toilet bowl. Plus: [10 Tips to Survive a Blackout](#)

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Make a Master List

To have the best chance of success, and to help in the budgeting process, make a master checklist of items you need, from administrative tasks like permits, right down to rollers for the paint. It's helpful to separate the list by items you have, and items you need to purchase. In the case of tools, making a list can help you decide which tools you can rent to save on costs versus purchasing new. Plus: [10 Vital Home Maintenance Tasks You'll Regret if You Forget](#)

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Create Drawings

You don't have to be an engineer to create job drawings, and chances are you'll require some form of drawing to obtain a permit for your house remodel. Be sure to note square footage, heights and widths of doors and windows, and current locations for any services like electrical, gas or water. Plus: [Add an Electrical Outlet](#)

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Obtain Permits

Many homeowners consider obtaining a building permit as an unnecessary headache which can slow down the renovation process, but permits are a necessary part of the process in most cases, which can come back to haunt you if not obtained in the first place. Building permits are necessary to ensure your house remodel meets structural and fire safety requirements and code inspectors in most jurisdictions can make you rip out non-conforming work if not up to snuff. This can create a very expensive headache when looking to sell your home down the road. It's always advisable to think ahead and ensure the permit process is followed. Check out our [DIY home improvement rules](#) for more tips. Plus: [The 8 Most Common Electrical Code Violations Most DIYers Make](#)

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Plan a Reno-Free Zone

Before starting all the mess of a remodel, it's a good plan to designate a renovation-free zone for your family to gather in semi-relaxation. Make sure you have everything you need in one place, such as a kettle or microwave, so you have one functional space to gather, eat or just unwind at the end of the day. For more relaxation ideas, check out our [8 Projects for Backyard Fun](#).

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Schedule Cleanup

After a long day of renovating, it can be tempting to just turn the light off and leave the mess for tomorrow. Unfortunately, this can cause delays, lost tools and lost sanity along the way. Be sure to write in an ample amount of time in your renovation plan to tidy up at the end of the day. Your future self will thank you! Plus: [Protect Your Home During Remodeling](#)

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FAMILY HANDYMAN

Plan Ahead

Even in a cosmetic remodel, there can be an opportunity to enhance the function or money-saving capability of your home. When ripping out an entire room, for instance, this may be the perfect time to [add insulation to the walls](#), upgrade your electrical panel or add additional light or electrical fixtures. The key is to think ahead to how you will use the room, and take advantage of cosmetic updates to enhance the structure of your home.