



Adding a room to your home may seem like a small project compared to building a new house, but actually building a room addition requires far greater skill. Not only do you have to make sure the room addition blends in with the style of your existing home, but workers must build the room around you and your family's daily activities. Here are some tips to follow when you add a room to your home:

Determine what you can afford. Visit with your banker, savings and loan or credit union and get pre-qualified for your room addition. They will look at your existing finances and tell you how much you can borrow.

Match the size of your addition to the size of your home. Look at the size of the other rooms in your house. Draw a floor plan to help you envision the space you'd like to add. Make sure the addition fits in with your current home design. Clip pictures from home magazines that look like what you want. Try to match trims, themes, etc. for a sense of continuity.

Visit your zoning office. Take a plot survey or pictures of your home from all angles. Find out where your house sits on your lot and where the property lines fall. Your zoning office should be able to tell you the maximum size for your room addition.

Look at other additions. Take a drive to look at other additions in your neighborhood. Which ones worked, which ones didn't? How do the additions blend with the rest of the house or neighborhood? How much space did the additions add to the footprint of the house? Does the addition look cramped on the lot? If there are additions you really like, ring the doorbell and ask for the name of the builder or contractor.

Do you need an architect? Examine the information you've collected. If your project is simple, you might be able to buy standard remodeling plans from a residential designer. There are plans for every project and budget. If your plans are not simple, a good architect can use the gathered information and your current home layout to tailor a plan specifically for you. Use the architect's plan to get contractor bids and finalize your financing.

Investigate contractors. Once you have a plan, call several contractors for price estimates. Ask them to fill out a detailed pricing estimate or bid form. These forms will breakdown the bids into labor and materials items. Compare the contractor bids. Also ask for names of customers and the locations of other work they've done. A room addition requires a lot of work, things such as plumbing, electrical work, carpentry, getting the right permits and passing building inspections. A good contractor will coordinate the necessary trades people and the permit process, saving you a lot of time and energy.



Get it in writing. When you've found your contractor it is time to draw up a contract. The contract will spell out the tasks to be done, the work schedule, and when payments are due. The contractor may have a form they use to draw up the contract. Have your legal expert review it.

Don't forget HVAC considerations. Have a heating/air conditioning expert examine your plans. Will the existing furnace or air conditioner be able to handle the load of the additional room? Or will you need an additional unit? You don't want to build a great addition and then not use the room because it is not a comfortable temperature.

Prepare for dirt and dust. Try to keep the rest of the house running as normally as possible during remodeling. Put away fragile family heirlooms or furniture. Put up plastic sheets over adjoining doorways to keep dirt and dust out of nearby rooms. Do your part to keep family members, pets and toys away from the remodeling area.

Be flexible. It is hard to live in a house under construction. Your family will be losing their privacy and may find it hard to keep to their normal routines. Electricity and water may be turned off at inconvenient times. Take the family on trips when possible to visit family and friends during the remodeling period.

page 2 of 2