



## Here are some tips that can help you with your remodeling project:

**Start with clear goals and create a game plan.** Ask yourself what do you want to accomplish with the remodeling and write down those goals. Clip out magazine examples that illustrate what you are looking for. Examine floor plans for ideas you'd like to incorporate. Build consensus with your spouse and other family members. Make sure you share a unified vision of the end results of your remodeling project.

**Learn from others.** Talk to friends and family who have had remodeling projects in their home. Maybe they'll even have stories of the things they learned the hard way. Ask for recommendations on builders or contractors that have a proven track record.

**Talk to 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 more complex, work with a good architect to tailor a plan specific to your home. Use the architect's plan to get contractor bids and finalize your financing.

**Take the time to check out potential contractors.** Check their credentials, see examples of their work and talk to homeowners who have used their services. Share with them what you are looking for and find out if they have the type of work expertise that you need to get your job done. Ask for a bid on the work you want done. When you find someone you can trust—sit down and negotiate a written contract. The contract will ensure that everyone is clear on what is to be done, how much it will cost, and the work schedule.

**Establish a budget for your project and arrange financing.** Decide what materials and fixtures you want well before you start the project. Planning ahead not only helps you keep to your budget—but will ensure that you have the materials you need—when you need them. You will also avoid costly work delays when materials that are out-of-stock or unavailable.

**Prepare for the unexpected.** This is especially true if you live in an older home. Tear out a wall and you're sure to find something you didn't expect. It might be lovely old brick that was covered over with drywall, or it might be termites. Make sure you have some contingency plans for these unexpected events.

**Another safety tip.** Move electrical switches away from water sources. Make sure all bathroom outlets have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). These circuits monitor the flow of electricity through the outlet's circuit. If there is any variation in the current, the GFCI automatically cuts off the flow of electricity, preventing injury.



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**Get ready to shop.** Remodeling entails picking out everything from major appliances, cabinets, and windows to smaller details like selecting wood finishes and towel bars. Investigate and become knowledgeable about the products that you will use in your remodeled home. Take measurements of the items you need, check out consumer report information, and do some comparison shopping. Be sure to bring home samples of carpet, tile and paint to consider the colors in your home lighting situation.

**Make a plan to save energy.** While you are remodeling, it is the perfect time to replace windows or doors, add weather stripping and caulking, add insulation, or upgrade your heating system. Install a programmable or automatic setback thermostat. When you add energy saving features to your remodeling project—you'll save money down the road with lower heating and air conditioning costs.

**Monitor your budget.** Once you have your remodeling plan and the remodeling has started, control the number of plan changes you request. Every time you change the plan, it will increase your cost and impact the final delivery schedule.

**Remodeling is dusty, messy, noisy work.** It is difficult to live in a home that is undergoing a major remodeling project. Your family will lose privacy and find it hard to keep to their normal routines. Electricity and water may be turned off at inconvenient times. Get out of the house. Schedule outside family activities when you can.

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