

# Nine Critical Tips to Read before Kicking Off a Home Remodel or Addition



These home remodel tips will help you avoid the most common pitfalls, problems, costs, and headaches that can sometimes come along with a home remodel project. The thrill of a home improvement project can quickly be snuffed out by unforeseen circumstances, stretched budgets, and other unexpected issues. The good news is that most of the time these problems can be mitigated, if not avoided entirely, by keeping an eye out for warning signals. Read on as we go through **9 essential home remodel tips** to consider before kicking off your project.

## 1. Make a Realistic Budget

While it goes without saying that any project needs a budget, it's not always an easy task to find the **balance between your dream design and the amount you've allotted for a project**. This is why it's so important to get a true understanding of pricing, both of materials and labor, so you can set your expectations to match your plan.

Unfortunately, home improvement and renovation television shows can sometimes be misleading in terms of costs, which can vary greatly based on location and timing. Therefore, be sure to have a contractor look over your budget and **confirm** that it's realistic. It's often helpful to get a price opinion from a contractor **early** in the design process so you can adjust accordingly. This will save both time and money on the design since the designer or architect will be able to adjust to your preferences quickly and with fewer revisions. And this will pay dividends during the build phase as well by having a clear design that fits what you want for the money you decided to spend.

## 2. Define the Scope of Work (SOW)

Once you've set your budget, you'll need to **clarify exactly what the project encompasses**. For example, if you're adding more space to your home, the SOW will include the size and type of addition, as well as what the finishes are. Your contractor will probably provide you with a more detailed SOW, so you only need to decide on the broad strokes to get the ball rolling. You may also need to ask yourself some tough questions about what you really need versus what you simply want. This will help you identify the **true intention** of the project and set expectations for

your design/build team. It can even help with scheduling and determining what work happens when, especially if you're considering phasing your project or moving out of the house for a few months during construction.

### 3. Determine Splurge-Worthy Items Early

Learning which items to spend your money on goes hand-in-hand with making a realistic budget and determining a sensible scope of work. The **earlier** you can make this determination, the more likely you will **stay on track** with costs. Think about which items you will use or see the most frequently and are more permanent, such as kitchen cabinets, as these are products that might be worth the higher price-tag. If you're on a tight budget, you might want to save on cosmetic finishes like paint and flooring, as these items can be easily changed at a later time.

### 4. Create with a Clear Vision in Mind

From the tile that will go on the walls to the appliances that will be installed, anyone who has completed a home remodel before knows that it is better to have just about everything picked out **before** you begin the work. This is because you will be making many decisions throughout the project, and the more you've made beforehand, the better off—**and better educated**—you will be. Online tools like Pinterest, a visit to our showroom, and/or material samples can help, and don't be afraid to start purchasing items to get the ball rolling. This is especially true of items that have a long lead time like windows or cabinets.

### 5. Get an Understanding of What's Already There

**Existing conditions** in a house can radically change the budget and scope of a remodel or addition, as sometimes something as seemingly simple as adding an additional outlet to a room can result in the rewiring of an entire home. If you know, for example, that you occasionally blow a fuse when you turn on your hairdryer and have the microwave going at the same time, that should be a hint that you may need to upgrade your electrical system. There are other signs of potential money pits too. An **in-depth conversation** with your contractor should reveal many of them so you can plan ahead.

### 6. Know Who You're Hiring

Whether you decide to hire a general contractor to manage the entire project or take over project management yourself and hire individual subcontractors for the job, it's important to find the **right team** to complete your home renovation. While word-of-mouth recommendations from friends might be enough for some, you may also consider checking on your contractor's credentials—**looking into their license, certificate of insurance, lien history, bond number, and any additional certifications**—to ensure you're dealing with a professional who is in good

standing. Perhaps even more important is finding a contractor you get along with and who **understands your vision**, so it's a great idea to have a few interviews or preliminary discussions before the formal engagement of services.

## 7. Don't Make Assumptions Based On Home Improvement Shows

While we are fans of home improvement shows just as much as the next, many series can make certain projects, such as building a stud wall or installing a new bathroom vanity, seem extremely simple and fast—and they might be for a professional or advanced DIY-er.

However, if you're considering an improvement project and you want to jump in and do some of the work yourself, **think realistically about what you can and cannot do**. Painting the walls of a small bathroom may be totally feasible by yourself, but painting all of the walls and ceilings of a 4,000-square-foot house is likely less so. While you may think you could be saving a lot of money by doing some of the work yourself, if it is something outside your wheelhouse it might cost even more to have a professional undo and then properly complete the project.

## 8. Prepare to Live in Discomfort During the Remodel

Living through a home improvement project can be a trying experience—**one that's often filled with dust, exhaustion, and plenty of take-out**. Even the most meticulous of contractors can't keep dust and dirt from flying everywhere, so know that your house will not be as clean as you would typically keep it, and try not to let that bother you. Along with the mess, there's also a lot of noise - all day long - and even though we eventually start to feel like family, there are going to be a bunch of extra people in your home every day until the project is finished.

If you think it will be more than your family wants to put up with, it's not out of the ordinary for our clients to rent a place to stay, go on vacation, or live with friends or family for a few critical weeks until the home is a bit more "liveable." Don't underestimate how big of a deal this can be to both your sanity and the progress the project can make during that time.

## 9. Remember to Stay Positive

There has yet to be a home remodel that has been silky smooth, without a single snag or snafu, so be prepared for times when things just aren't going right. It's natural to want everything to go perfectly according to plan, but with so many moving parts involved, it's unlikely that everything will run exactly how you imagined, which can be frustrating.

Yet at the same time, **keep things in perspective**: just because something hasn't been delivered on time or because you're a bit behind schedule isn't the end of the world, and it's best to try and have the mentality of "how can we fix this?" rather than "whose fault is this?" Most importantly, keep your eye on the prize, and remember the project won't go on forever, although it may sometimes seem that way when you're in the thick of it.