

7 Secrets to Easier Remodeling

1. Look Ahead:

Take your time. Think about your entire home, but confine remodeling to immediate goals, needs, and priorities. Don't plan a major whole house remodel or a room addition if you would rather move.

2. Get Organized:

Start a reference file of pictures, ideas, questions, and concerns which define your preferences. Narrow it down in terms of specifics and don't try to duplicate scenes or rooms. Interpret what you like into practical, attractive solutions.

3. Budget Realistically:

Once you know that scope of work, set a preliminary budget which is affordable. Use 70 to 80 percent of that figure as your final budget. This will give you a 20 to 30 percent reserve for changes and contingencies.

4. Keep Accurate Files:

Make a notebook or computer file to record decisions and agreements with contractors. Be sure you understand the terminology, plans, drawings, materials specification, estimates, permits and schedules.

5. Communicate Well:

Do not rely on verbal agreements. Ask questions. Insist upon a written "Change Order" which clearly explains the costs and specifics of all changes and revisions you make. Honesty and candor are more important than technical know-how and are the secrets to successful remodeling.

6. Use Your Instincts:

Interview only reputable, experienced contractors. Check references. Ask their customers specific, direct questions. Rely upon your intuition and observations so you will be comfortable with your choice of contractors.

7. Expect Mutual Understandings:

Insist upon a written comprehensive contract which clearly explains the work, protects you and guides the contractor.